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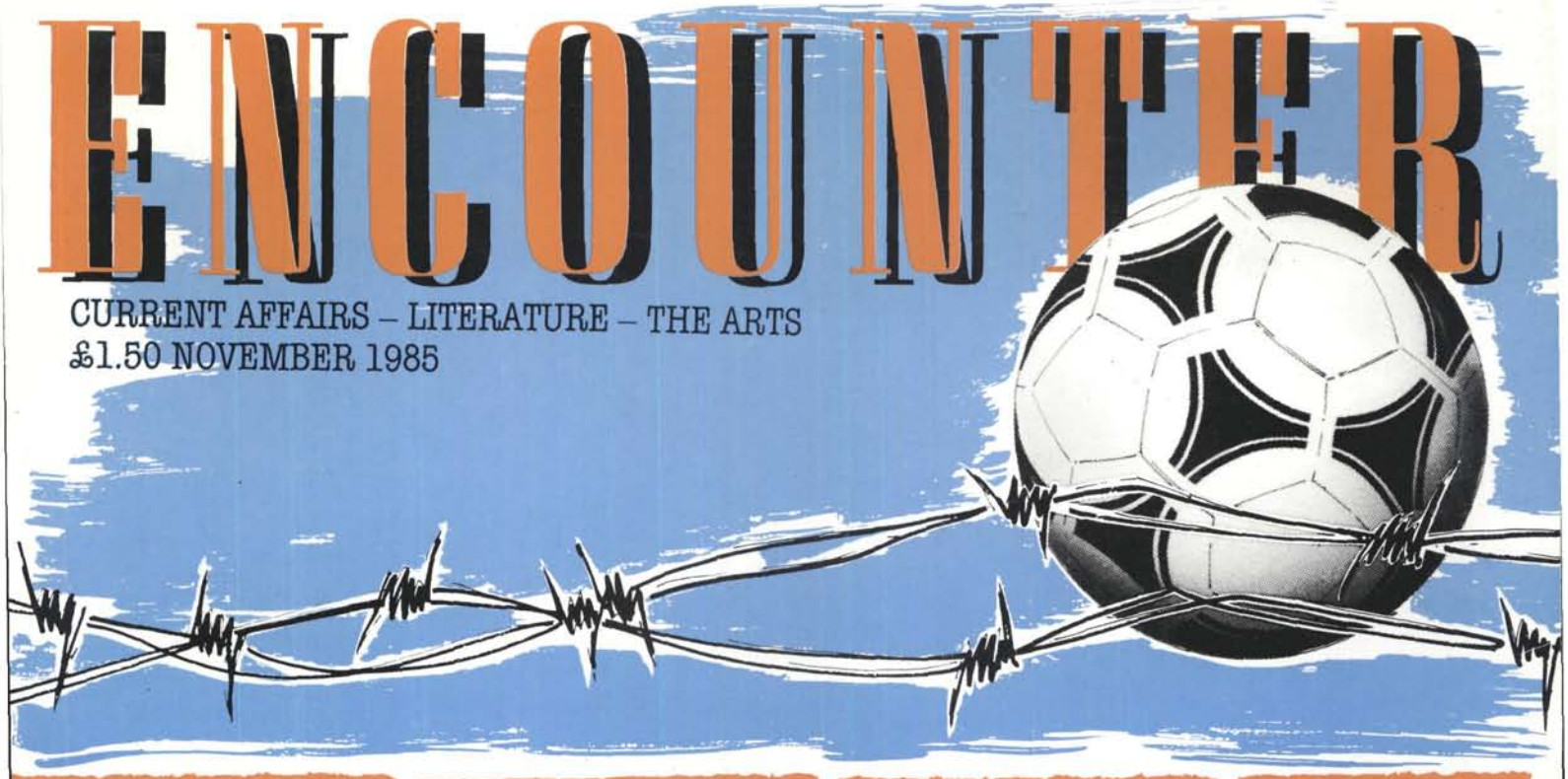

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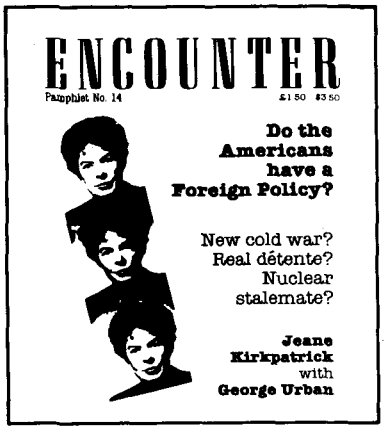

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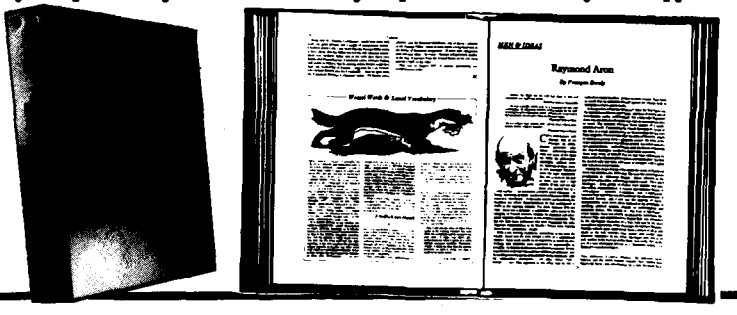

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Eva Tucker

Fertility Doll

PAMELA WOKE into the silver Lagos dawn, happy. She could hear the humming of the garden boy, see the weaver-birds dipping in and out of their nests hanging from the palm-fronds. She turned over and saw the wooden fertility doll the Olaguns had put into her room, looked at her long rectangular head, tapering and slightly rounded towards the neck. Two-thirds of the way down her head the face began, bowed eyebrows sweeping across it and defining the forehead. The mouth was small and modest, her neck long, embellished by seven rings and set at an angle of perfection on the narrow shoulders, breasts jutting at endearingly uneven angles from them. The rest of the body was schematic. Pamela leapt out of bed into the warmth that clothed her and walked naked across the room. She picked the doll up and turned it in her hand. It was exactly like the one Mary Olagun had given Mummy and Daddy when she came to stay at home. Seeing the doll here had made Pamela's arrival at the Olaguns a month ago into a kind of homecoming. She loved their cool and spacious house in the leafy lanes of Apapa immediately and felt more at home in it than she had ever done in her parents' hospitable house in Somerset. Here, for the first time in her life she was quite sure she was approved of and liked. The relief tingled through her with a throb of pleasure like the juice of her first mango with its shock of that something slightly peppery behind the sweetness that all things Nigerian have.

Now she was here, the twenty-two years of her life in England seemed not to belong to her. She thought of a paragraph from Wittgenstein which Mary had shown her when they were both at Bristol, Mary achieving her First in philosophy, Pamela scraping a Second in history because she was too busy with famine relief work to concentrate. "Put a man in the wrong atmosphere and nothing will function as it should. He will seem unhealthy in every part. Put him back into his proper element and everything will blossom and look healthy. But if he is not in his right element, what then? Well, then he just has to make the best of appearing before the world as a cripple."

At home, everything had been wrong for her. Cheltenham Ladies, for a start. It was what her parents wanted, Mummy particularly thought it would file away Pamela's awkward corners. But the filing process only made her corners more jagged and more pointed. Pamela wanted to read English and try for Oxford. But the staff decided against it: let her try for history at Bristol. She allowed herself to be diverted, she did not know how to swim against the tide. When she achieved her place at Bristol, Mummy choked out congratulations in the voice she used when Daddy did or said something that was not quite. . . . In the summer, between school and college, she was expected to have fun, capital F. Meaning boys. But she knew she was not the sort of girl boys went to for fun. Her face was all right, but the way her head was set on her shoulders made her have a permanent poke and stoop. Pamela realised absolutely that she was not well assembled and that it was unlikely any boy would want her body to cleave to his while he ravished it with passionate endearments. She did not mind too much, for in spite of her defects she did not consider it impossible that a man might love her. But after Mummy's attempts to make her acceptable had culminated in tears in front of a full-length mirror trying on an off-the-shoulder pink dance dress, the family realised she would have to be left to find a man in her own way.

While she was at college, there was an ever open, breathless invitation to bring home any friends she liked, anyone whatever. She brought home Mary Olagun from Lagos. Mary's father was an Igbo barrister, her mother was English. Mary fitted easily into Pamela's family landscape: Daddy made a fuss of her, the boys liked her, she even found their friends, who always struck Pamela as entirely wooden when regarded in an amorous light, amusing and flirted with them. Mummy was absolutely charming to her and seared Pamela with silent reproaches. Mary enchanted them with stories of her home in Lagos, making it sound like a fairy-tale, full of magic, good and bad. She couldn't wait for Pamela to see it all. Mary's invitation was backed by a letter from her parents. When Pamela held the envelope with the Nigerian stamps in her hand an intimation of an entirely new reality shot up her arm. When she got her degree, everyone expected she would go into teaching, somewhere suitable. But Pamela knew quite clearly she would not, knew it so clearly there seemed no need to say it.

Pamela put the fertility doll down and began to get dressed. The Olaguns were taking her to a party, one of those all day Yoruba affairs. "Not my style of thing",

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Peter Olagun had said, passing fastidious fingers over a tiny speck on his freshly laundered shirt, "but we ought to go. And it will be a new experience for you."

Mary and her mother Milly had taken Pamela shopping in Balogun market and she had bought swatches of marvellous brilliant Dutch wax print cottons, with patterns of peacocks and orchids, complicated Islamic abstract designs, but although she knew she looked good in them—the poke and stoop had disappeared the moment Lagos red earth struck through the soles of her feet—she went to an old Liberty print she had always spurned at home, wild strawberries in fruit and flower scattered on a dark green background. Mummy had chosen it for her. "My trad", she said to her mirror image as she went down to meet Mary and Milly swathed in yards of brilliant cloth; her sparkling head-dress making Milly's English rose face look unnaturally pale. Mary looked magnificent. Pamela was appalled to notice a tinge of envy in her glance when she saw Pamela in her English dress, just as she had been appalled to see Mary comparing skin colour with friends from other mixed marriages, boasting of their relative fairness. Mary looked far less happy and glowing here at home than she had in Bristol, and was in fact making strenuous efforts to return there as a post-graduate student. This is not her proper element, Pamela thought, surprised.

THE PARTY WAS IN HONOUR of the consecration of the reinterment of some long-dead ancestor's bones. The Olaguns pooh-poohed the ritual and made sure it was all over when they got there. The narrow streets had been cordoned off from traffic, and people were sitting in long lines at rickety metal tables on rickety metal chairs under brilliant awnings. There were only two or three other white faces and Pamela felt a keen sense of arrival sweep through her as she watched the family of brothers and their wives, whose guests they were, process slowly down the unmade-up red earth alley, followed by a band of beggars. Peter Olagun caught Pamela's eye on them.

"They are not Nigerian", he said emphatically. "They are from Niger." He said it as if that made them scarcely human. When one of the barefoot beggar children came up to her, Pamela made a point of giving him something. "Don't. You must not. It solves nothing, they will all come now", Peter said, putting his large brown hand over hers. She noticed a graze showing pink through the brown and thought with unexpected bitterness, flayed we are all alike. In fact, no more beggars came, only numerous bitches heavy with milk from recent whelpings, shuffling round the tables, shaking the flies from their ears. Pamela had never been anywhere in her life where the sense data that now assailed her were so contradictory: she drank greedily from her glass of Star beer which was immediately replenished. She used her fingers like her neighbours to mop up the red sauce with the dumplings of pounded yam. She sucked the slices of pineapple until the juice ran from her mouth.

New guests continued to arrive, men and women sailed along with flamboyant grace, hardly touching the ground they covered. They transformed all that lay before and behind them, so that the pitted, refuse-laden little streets took on the brilliance of the gold brocade, the velvet and the lace they were wearing. They transfigured the squalid underlay of the scene, like Rumpelstiltskin spinning gold out of straw. They flashed their expensive cameras at each other, oblivious that the lenses were also snapping up cadaverous and toothless blind beggars, naked toddlers urinating in the wide open drains, polio victims creeping along on leather knee-pads. Pamela heard drumbeats in the distance and at the same moment a muted horn blast came from the small wooden building opposite her. A gnarled unshaven old man began to chant the muezzin. The building was a mosque. Immediately, numerous other old men emerged from various corners of the street which up to that moment had seemed to be given over entirely to the party and entered their place of worship, leaving their shoes at the entrance. Pamela passed her hands in front of her eyes and suspended disbelief. The drums came closer. All this, she thought—and meant the tinsel and the ordures, the fullness and the want—is their survival kit. They are partying themselves into the capacity to go on living, as a war dance gives courage for the fray.

The drums were now throbbing quite close behind her. There were three musicians, grinning expectantly, removing Naira notes from their foreheads which other guests had stuck there with words of encouragement. Now one began to sing, while the other two drummed with fervour until the sweat trickled down their faces. Pamela saw her neighbours begin to smile and then laugh outright; even Peter Olagun was swaying from side to side with amusement. Pamela realised that somehow the joke was on her and the blood rushed to her face, which stimulated a new burst of drumming. Someone had come to sit in the empty chair opposite her. That person now took her hand. "Don't mind them", he said in soft clear English. "They are singing your praises, they are wishing you a fine man and many, many sons. They praise the slope of your breasts and the width of your hips."

Pamela looked at the man who was holding her hand. She had met her husband.

HIS LIMBS FLOWED from him like a dancer's. Even when he was sitting perfectly still, movement rippled from him and it was that movement that now flowed into Pamela and lifted her into a different dimension. The party continued, electric light bulbs were strung up and lit against the darkening sky, people began to dance to the beat of a steel band, but

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Pamela and Ukpai were elsewhere, swimming into a new and ever-widening world, alone together. When he embraced her later that night in his flat in Surulere, she felt her skin become brown, and his white, they flowed in and out of each other, forgetting who was who, which male, which female. Together they achieved a new identity. They made love in the fullest possible sense of the word, using their bodies to make their spirits flower. To say that she had lost her virginity, had lost anything at all, seemed to Pamela a travestied account of what had occurred. She had lost nothing—she had been made whole.

Over coffee and paw-paw with lime juice, Ukpai asked her to marry him. Crisp and radiant in her Liberty print, Pamela told him again she loved him but that they must not be over-hasty. How did they know whether they had the same ideas about anything at all?

"You *are* my wife", he said to her, and his certainty almost overtopped her. Then she said. "What would your family say if you brought a white wife to them?"

"I do not ask *you* these questions", Ukpai answered. "We are for each other, not for our parents."

He made love to her again.

He told her she was beautiful and she almost cried because she knew it was untrue. But when she caught sight of herself in the mirror she saw that something had happened to her: there was a nacreous glow on her skin, a resilience about the flesh. She *was* beautiful.

Very nearly then she said yes.

"But how will you feel about children who are neither black nor white?"

"I do not ask you these questions", Ukpai said again.

"But they must be asked."

"I shall love them", he said.

Pamela suddenly had an image of herself in her parents' country garden, Mummy pruning roses in her National Trust pinny, herself saying she was about to marry a Nigerian, a black man. She could see the look of incomprehension enamelling Mummy's features.

"Of course I'll marry you", Pamela said to Ukpai.

Just as well, because she was pregnant.

THE LIGHT OF THE FULL MOON fell through the mosquito netting on to the fertility doll in Pamela's room, the dark wood shone silver, the rings on the doll's neck vibrated with life. Pamela lay on the bed, her hand on her stomach. Whatever happened next, the baby inside her had sprung from love, the best kind of love, unconstrained by social expectation. Whatever happened next, the child would be hers and Ukpai's always. There was no point in being frightened. Perfect love casteth out fear. The evanescence of time could not tamper with that. She knew things would be difficult for her child, she remembered Mary's hungry gaze whenever she saw anyone fair-haired and blue-eyed, underestimating her own great success as a person. Was Mary a cripple in Wittgenstein's sense? And what was going to be the right atmosphere for *her* child? Lagos for a start, certainly, and then, later, there would be the choice.

Perhaps through my child, Pamela thought, I shall be able to love my own home. It suddenly occurred to her that she had given up the roses and cream, the apples and cider, the dogs and the horses, the sweet fine English rain and furrowed fields in winter frost, without ever having been able fully to love them. Pamela knew, through it all, that Mummy loved her, intensely, sometimes embarrassingly. Loved her and the boys instead of Daddy. She had seen Mummy freeze Daddy off when he looked at her, it was one of the ways in which Daddy was not quite. . . . In a sense, *she* had made a "mixed" marriage. Pamela had an idea they were vaguely Saxon on Mummy's side, whose people were Suffolk, vaguely Celtic on Daddy's side, whose antecedents had spread from the south-west of England into Ireland and from there to Liverpool. What an anachronistic way of thinking! In a couple of hundred years most people would probably look like Mary, combining the best of both races. Beautiful. Pamela knew that in the end Mummy would open her heart to any baby, even though the Honiton lace christening robe had not been visualised for anyone with woolly hair, pink only on the palms of their hands and soles of their feet.

She looked at the fertility doll shining at her in the night.

"I love you", she whispered.

SHE TOLD MILLY OLAGUN FIRST.

Milly put an arm round Pamela and held her close. Pamela could see tears shining in Milly's eyes. She said nothing, nothing at all, and Pamela was clothed in that benevolent silence as she was clothed in the African heat. What communicated itself to her with Milly's hug was not only the feeling of acceptance but also the knowledge of extreme difficulty, of sacrifice. Peter Olagun, too, put his arms round her. Pamela felt it to be a blessing.

Then she told Mary, who had managed to get herself accepted as a Ph.D. student back in Bristol. They were sipping palm wine from gourds in the National Museum Kitchen, the only two women unaccompanied by a man. Pamela had not noticed at first, but she could see something defiant about the slope of Mary's shoulders and the downward gaze of her eyes. Mary was asserting her Englishness. Yes, Pamela told her friend, Ukpai Nwuneli had made her pregnant.

"You can't mean it!" Mary said, horrified. "Haven't you heard of the pill?"

"But . . . but . . . I'm absolutely delighted", Pamela said.

"What *will* your parents say?" Mary asked her, and Pamela caught a cadence of Mummy's voice.

Something made Pamela cry then. She pushed away the gourd of palm wine.

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"Well", Mary said, censoriously, "I'd be crying, too."

And then, "So you'll be meeting his family. You know, his mother isn't the senior wife."

"I *don't* know", Pamela said, frightened. "I don't know anything about them."

"His father's got six wives", Mary said. "Ukpai's mother is the most beautiful and the favourite. They all six had a hand in bringing him up and the whole village helped with his education. They're enormously proud of him, of course. They won't like you."

Mary softened the words with a touch of her long fingers on Pamela's cheek. "Well, if it's a boy, they won't mind too much. They'll tell him not to marry you till the baby's born."

"We love each other", Pamela said.

Mary gazed down into her gourd of palm wine. Then she put it to her lips and drank it down.

"He won't be faithful to you", she said. "Husbands are not faithful to their wives in Nigeria—or anywhere else for that matter. When you have the baby, if not before, he will need to make love to someone else."

Pamela stiffened. She did not recognise her friend Mary.

"I'm going", Pamela said, and walked out of the Museum Kitchen, past the hairdressing hut and the goldsmith's hut and the carvers' hut. The Olaguns' driver was waiting on the dry, neat lawn. Mary came running after her. "I wish it hadn't happened. I know you think love will carry you through, but it's just not possible for a man to be faithful to his wife, it is just *not* possible."

"Your parents?" Pamela asked when they were driving back to Apapa. Mary did not answer her.

"Shall I take a letter for *your* parents?" she asked. "I'm flying at the week-end. I know I shall be homesick the minute I get to England, but I can't stand it here, the heat fuddles my brain."

"Yes", Pamela said very quietly. "Yes, I'll give you a letter."

Then the two young women looked at each other.

"I do love you", Mary said, "you know that."

Pamela knew it.

When she told Ukpai, he was overjoyed.

"Now you can meet the family", he said.

Pamela flushed when she thought of Ukpai's father and his six wives. "Tell me about them", she said, but Ukpai only spread out his arms and put them around her.

"You are think how to tell your parents?" When he was moved, Ukpai's perceptions sharpened and his English deteriorated. She rested her face on his shoulder. She did not know there could be such a sense of belonging.

Suddenly he let go of her and swung his left arm violently, silent laughter shaking out of him. He ran round and round the room holding his nose. At last the laughter sounded out of him, high-pitched and endlessly happy.

"You will tell dem when de baby come six months after we marry dat in our country de seeds ripen good and fast, de heat make os fahrtile quick-quick."

Pamela looked at him amazed.

"I tell dem dat", she said and swung her arm hard, laughing.

Ukpai put on a tape of Billie Holliday and began to dance towards her. Pamela danced with him. She had not known she could dance.

The Gamekeeper

In the loneliness of winter moonlight
his mind would walk the woodland, and by
its pale illumination of the night
would search for shapes in bushes. Facelessly,
like absence and like silence he would move
through areas where his hand had fed the ground
with seeds and broken feelings, search above
for corresponding eyes that also found
a terror in his shadow. Everywhere
the branches turned to catapults and sticks.
Brambles moved as nets, as looping snares
to snatch his pallid footsteps. And the chicks
shrank close to one another as he passed,
as quiet as the air, and overcast.

John Gurney

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Primo Levi

From The Periodic Table

Iron

26 Fe iron	27 Co cobalt
44 Ru ruthenium	45 Rh rhodium

NIGHT LAY BEYOND the walls of the Chemical Institute, the night of Europe: Chamberlain had returned from Munich duped, Hitler had marched into Prague without firing a shot, Franco had subdued Barcelona and was ensconced in Madrid. Fascist Italy, the small-time pirate, had occupied Albania, and the premonition of imminent catastrophe condensed like grumous dew in the houses and streets, in wary conversations and dozing consciences.

But the night did not penetrate those thick walls; Fascist censorship itself, the régime's masterwork, kept us shut off from the world, in a white, anaesthetised limbo. About thirty of us had managed to surmount the harsh barrier of the first exams and had been admitted to the second year's Qualitative Analysis laboratory. We had entered that enormous, dark, smoky hall like someone who, coming into the House of the Lord, reflects on each of his steps. The previous lab, where I had tackled zinc, seemed an infantile exercise to us now, similar to when as children we had played at cooking: something, by hook or crook, in one way or another, always came of it, perhaps too little, perhaps not very pure, but you really had to be a hopeless case or pigheaded not to get magnesium sulphate from magnesite, or potassium bromide from bromine.

Not here: here the affair had turned serious, the confrontation with Mother-Matter, our hostile mother, was tougher and closer. At two in the afternoon, Professor D., with his ascetic and distracted air, handed each of us precisely one gram of a certain powder: by the next day we had to complete the qualitative analysis, that is, report what metals and non-metals it contained. Report in writing, like a police report, only yes and no, because doubts and hesitations were not admissible: it was each time a choice, a deliberation, a mature and responsible undertaking, for which Fascism had not prepared us, and from which emanated a good smell, dry and clean.

Some elements, such as iron and copper, were easy and direct, incapable of concealment; others, such as bismuth and cadmium, were deceptive and elusive. There was a method, a toilsome, age-old plan for systematic research, a kind of combined steamroller and fine-toothed comb which nothing (in theory) could escape, but I preferred to invent each time a new road, with swift, extemporaneous forays, as in a war of movement, instead of the deadly grind of a war of position. Sublimate mercury into droplets, transform sodium into chloride, and identify it as trough-shaped chips under my microscope. One way or another, here the relationship with Matter changed, became dialectical: it was fencing, a face-to-face match. Two unequal opponents: on one side, putting the questions, the unfledged, unarmed chemist, at his elbow the textbook by Autenrieth as his sole ally (because D., often called to help out in difficult cases, maintained a scrupulous neutrality, refused to give an opinion: a wise attitude, since whoever opens his mouth can put his foot in it, and professors are not supposed to do that); on the other side, responding with enigmas, stood Matter, with her sly passivity, ancient as the All and portentously rich in deceptions, as solemn and subtle as the Sphinx. I was just beginning to read German words and was enchanted by the word *Urstoff* (which means "element": literally, "primal substance") and by the prefix *Ur* which appeared in it and which in fact expresses ancient origin, remote distance in space and time.

In this place, too, nobody wasted many words teaching us how to protect ourselves from acids, caustics, fires, and explosions; it appeared that the Institute's rough and ready morality counted on the process of natural selection to pick out those among us most qualified for physical and professional survival. There were few ventilation hoods; each student, following his text's prescriptions, in the course of systematic analysis, conscientiously let loose into the air a good dose of hydrochloric acid and ammonia, so that a dense, hoary mist of ammonium chloride stagnated permanently in the lab, depositing minute scintillating crystals on the

PRIMO LEVI (b. Turin 1919) completed his degree in chemistry at the University of Turin in 1941. He joined the Italian anti-Fascist resistance, was arrested together with his partisan group, and later deported to Auschwitz. His experiences there he has described in earlier autobiographical works, "If This is a Man" and "The Truce" (reissued as a Penguin Modern Classic).

"The Periodic Table", acclaimed by writers such as Umberto Eco and Saul Bellow, is a memoir not only of that terrible experience but of events before and after. Brought out in the US by Schocken Books, these unusual recollections, grouped round the hitherto prosaic chemical elements, are published in England on 21 October by Michael Joseph. The translation is by Raymond Rosenthal.

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window-panes. Into the hydrogen sulphide room with its murderous atmosphere withdrew couples seeking privacy and a few lone wolves to eat their snacks.

Through the murk and in the busy silence, we heard a Piedmontese voice say: "*Nuntio vobis gaudium magnum. Habemus ferrum.*" "I announce to you a great joy. We have iron." It was March 1939, and a few days earlier an almost identical solemn announcement ("*Habemus Papam*") had closed the conclave that had raised to Peter's Throne Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, in whom many put their hopes, since one must after all put one's hope in someone or something. The blasphemous announcement came from Sandro, the quiet one.

In our midst, Sandro was a loner. He was a boy of medium height, thin but muscular, who never wore an overcoat, even on the coldest days. He came to class in worn corduroy knickers, knee-socks made of homespun wool and sometimes a short black cape which made me think of the Tuscan poet Renato Fucini. He had large, calloused hands, a bony, rugged profile, a face baked by the sun, a low forehead beneath the line of his hair, which he wore very short and cut in a brush. He walked with the peasant's long, slow stride.

A few months before, the radical laws against the Jews had been proclaimed, and I too was becoming a loner. My Christian class-mates were civil people; none of them, nor any of the teachers, had directed at me a hostile word or gesture, but I could feel them withdraw and, following an ancient pattern, I withdrew as well: every look exchanged between me and them was accompanied by a minuscule but perceptible flash of mistrust and suspicion. What do you think of me? What am I for you? The same as six months ago, your equal who does not go to Mass, or the Jew who, as Dante put it, "in your midst laughs at you"?

I HAD NOTICED with amazement and delight that something was happening between Sandro and me. It was not at all a friendship born from affinity; on the contrary, the difference in our origins made us rich in "exchangeable goods", like two merchants who meet after coming from remote and mutually unknown regions. Nor was it the normal portentous intimacy of twenty-year-olds: with Sandro I never reached this point. I soon realised that he was generous, subtle, tenacious, and brave, even with a touch of insolence, but he had an elusive, untamed quality, so that, although we were at the age when one always has the need, instinct, and immodesty of inflicting on one another everything that swarms in one's head and elsewhere (and this is an age that can last long, but ends with the first compromise), nothing had got through his carapace of reserve, nothing of his inner world, which nevertheless one felt was dense and fertile—nothing save a few occasional dramatically truncated hints. He had the nature of a cat with whom one can live for decades without ever being permitted to penetrate its sacred pelt.

We had many concessions to make to each other. I told him we were like cation and anion, but Sandro did not seem to acknowledge the comparison. He was born in Serra d'Ivrea, a beautiful but niggardly region. He was the son of a mason and spent his summers working as a shepherd. Not a shepherd of souls: a shepherd of sheep, and not because of Arcadian rhetoric or eccentricity, but happily, out of love for the earth and grass and an abundance of heart. He had a curious mimetic talent, and when he talked about cows, chickens, sheep, and dogs he was transformed, imitating their way of looking, their movements and voices, becoming very gay and seeming to turn into an animal himself, like a shaman. He taught me about plants and animals, but said very little about his family. His father had died when he was a child; they were simple, poor people, and since the boy was bright, they had decided to make him study so that he would bring money home: he had accepted this with Piedmontese seriousness but without enthusiasm. He had travelled the long route of high school—*liceo*—aiming at the highest marks with the least effort. He was not interested in Catullus and Descartes, he was interested in being promoted, and spending Sunday on his skis and climbing the rocks. He had chosen chemistry because he had thought it better than other studies; it was a trade and dealt with things one can see and touch, a way to earn one's bread less tiring than working as a carpenter or a peasant.

We began studying physics together, and Sandro was surprised when I tried to explain to him some of the ideas that at the time I was confusedly cultivating. That the nobility of Man, acquired in a hundred centuries of trial and error, lay in making himself the conqueror of matter, and that I had enrolled in chemistry because I wanted to remain faithful to this nobility. That conquering matter is to understand it, and understanding matter is necessary to understanding the universe and ourselves: and that therefore Mendeleev's Periodic Table, which just during those weeks we were laboriously learning to unravel, was poetry, loftier and more solemn than all the poetry we had swallowed down in *liceo*; and come to think of it, it even rhymed! That if one looked for the bridge, the missing link, between the world of words and the world of things, one did not have to look far: it was there, in our Autenrieth, in our smoke-filled labs, and in our future trade.

And finally, and fundamentally, an honest and open boy, did he not smell the stench of Fascist truths which tainted the sky? Did he not perceive it as an ignominy that a thinking man should be asked to believe without thinking? Was he not filled with disgust at all the dogmas, all the unproved affirmations, all the imperatives? He did feel it; so then, how could he not feel a new dignity and majesty in our study, how could he ignore the fact that the chemistry and physics on which we fed, besides being nourishments vital in themselves, were the antidote to Fascism which he and I were seeking, because they were clear and distinct and verifiable at every step, and not a tissue of lies and emptiness, like the radio and newspapers?

Sandro listened to me with ironical attention, always ready to deflate me with a couple of civil and terse words when I trespassed into rhetoric. But something was ripening in him (certainly not all my doing; those were months heavy with fateful events), something that troubled him because it was at once new and ancient. He, who until then had read only

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Salgari, Jack London, and Kipling, overnight became a furious reader: he digested and remembered everything, and everything in him spontaneously fell into place as a way of life; together with this, he began to study, and his average shot up from C to A. At the same time, out of unconscious gratitude, and perhaps also out of a desire to get even, he in turn took an interest in my education and made it clear to me that it had gaps. I might even be right: it might be that matter is our teacher and perhaps also, for lack of something better, our political school; but he had another form of matter to lead me to, another teacher: not the powders of the Analytical Lab but the true, authentic, timeless *Urstoff*, the rocks and ice of the nearby mountains. He proved to me without too much difficulty that I didn't have the proper credentials to talk about matter. What commerce, what intimacy had I had, until then, with Empedocles' four elements? Did I know how to light a stove? Wade across a torrent? Was I familiar with a storm high up in the mountains? The sprouting of seeds? No. So he too had something vital to teach me.

A COMRADESHIP WAS BORN, and there began for me a feverish season. Sandro seemed to be made of iron, and he was bound to iron by an ancient kinship: his father's fathers, he told me, had been tinkers (*magnin*) and blacksmiths in the Canavese valleys: they made nails on the charcoal forges, sheathed wagon-wheels with red-hot hoops, pounded iron plates until deafened by the noise; and he himself when he saw the red vein of iron in the rock felt he was meeting a friend. In the winter when it suddenly hit him, he would tie his skis on his rusty bike, leaving early in the morning and pedalling away until he reached the snow, without a cent, an artichoke in one pocket and the other full of lettuce; then he came back in the evening or even the next day, sleeping in haylofts, and the more storms and hunger he suffered the happier and healthier he was.

In the summer, when he went off by himself, he often took along a dog to keep him company. This was a small yellow mongrel with a downcast expression; in fact, as Sandro had told me, acting out in his way the animal episode, as a puppy he had had a mishap with a cat. He had come too close to a litter of newborn kittens, the mother cat was miffed and became enraged, and had begun to hiss, getting all puffed up; but the puppy had not yet learned the meaning of those signals and remained there like a fool. The cat had attacked him, chased him, caught him, and scratched his nose; the dog had been permanently traumatised. He felt dishonoured, and so Sandro had made him a cloth ball, explained to him that it was the cat, and every morning presented it to him so that he could take his revenge on it for the insult and regain his canine honour. For the same therapeutic motive, Sandro took him to the mountains, so he could have some fun; he tied him to one end of a rope, tied himself to the other, set the dog firmly on a rock ledge, and then climbed up; when the rope ended, he pulled it up slowly, and the dog had learned to walk up with his muzzle pointed skywards and his four paws against the nearly vertical wall of rock, moaning softly as though he were dreaming.

Sandro climbed the rocks more by instinct than technique, trusting to the strength of his hands and saluting ironically, in the projecting rock to which he clung, the silicon, calcium, and magnesium he had learned to recognise in the course on mineralogy. He seemed to feel that he had wasted a day if he had not in some way got to the bottom of his reserve of energy, and then even his eyes became brighter and he explained to me that, with a sedentary life, a deposit of fat forms behind the eyes, which is not healthy; by working hard the fat is consumed and the eyes sink back into their sockets and become keener.

He spoke grudgingly about his exploits. He did not belong to the species of persons who do things in order to talk about them (like me); he did not like high-sounding words, indeed words. It appeared that in speaking, as in mountain climbing, he had never received lessons; he spoke as no one speaks, saying only the core of things.

IF NECESSARY he carried a thirty-kilo pack, but usually he travelled without it; his pockets were sufficient, and in them he put some vegetables, as I have said, a chunk of bread, a pocket-knife, sometimes the dog-eared Alpine Club guide, and a skein of wire for emergency repairs. In fact he did not carry the guide because he believed in it, but for the opposite reason. He rejected it because he felt that it shackled him; not only that, he also saw it as a bastard creature, a detestable hybrid of snow and rock mixed up with paper. He took it into the mountains to vilify, happy if he could catch it in an error, even if it was at his and his climbing companion's expense. He could walk for two days without eating, or eat three meals all together and then leave. For him, all seasons were good. In the winter he skied, but not at the well-equipped, fashionable slopes, which he shunned with laconic scorn: too poor to buy ourselves the sealskin strips for the ascents, he showed me how you sew on rough hemp cloths, Spartan devices which absorb the water and then freeze like codfish, and must be tied around your waist when you ski downhill. He dragged me along on exhausting treks through the fresh snow, far from any sign of human life, following routes that he seemed to intuit like a savage. In the summer, from shelter to shelter, inebriating ourselves with the sun, the effort, and the wind, and scraping the skin of our fingertips on rocks never before touched by human hands: but not on the famous peaks, nor in quest of memorable feats; such things did not matter to him at all. What mattered was to know his limitations, to test and improve himself; more obscurely, he felt the need to prepare himself (and to prepare me) for an iron future, drawing closer month by month.

TO SEE SANDRO IN THE MOUNTAINS reconciled you to the world and made you forget the nightmare weighing on Europe. This was his place, what he had been made for, like the marmots whose whistle and snout he imitated: in the mountains he became happy, with a silent, infectious happiness, like a light that is switched on. He aroused a new communion with the earth and sky, into which

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flowed my need for freedom, the plenitude of my strength, and a hunger to understand the things he had pushed me toward. We would come out at dawn, rubbing our eyes, through the small door of the Martinotti bivouac, and there, all around us, barely touched by the sun, stood the white and brown mountains, new as if created during the night that had just ended and at the same time innumerably ancient. They were an island, an elsewhere.

In any event, it was not always necessary to go high and far. In the in-between seasons Sandro's kingdom was the rock gymnasiums. There are several, two or three hours by bike from Turin, and I would be curious to know whether they are still frequented: the Straw Stack Pinnacles with the Wolkmann Tower, the Teeth of Cumiana, Patanüa Rock (which means Bare Rock), the Plô, the Sbarüa, and others, with their homely, modest names. The last, the Sbarüa, I think was discovered by Sandro himself and a mythical brother of his whom Sandro never let me see but who, from his few scanty hints, must have stood in the same relationship to him as he stood to the run of humanity. *Sbarüa* is a noun from the verb *sbarüé*, which means "to terrify"; the Sbarüa is a prism of granite that towers about a hundred metres above a modest hill bristling with brambles and a brushwood coppice; like Dante's *Veglio di Creta*—the Old Man of Crete—it is split from base to summit by a fissure that gets narrower as it rises, finally forcing the climber to come out on the rock face itself, where, precisely, he is terrified, and where at that time there was just a single piton, charitably left behind by Sandro's brother.

Those were curious places, frequented by a few dozen amateurs of our stamp, all of whom Sandro knew either by name or sight: we climbed up, not without technical problems, and surrounded by the irritating buzz of enormous bluebottle flies attracted by our sweat, crawling up good solid rock walls interrupted by grassy ledges where ferns and strawberries grew or, in the fall, blackberries; often enough we used as holds the trunks of puny little trees, rooted in the cracks, and after a few hours we reached the peak, which was not a peak at all but mostly placid pastureland where cows stared at us with indifferent eyes. Then we descended at breakneck speed, in a few minutes, along paths strewn with old and recent cow dung, to recover our bikes.

At other times our exploits were more demanding; never any quiet jaunts, since Sandro said that we would have plenty of time when we were forty to look at the scenery. "Let's go, shall we?" he said to me one day in February—which in his language meant that, since the weather was good, we should leave in the afternoon for the winter climb of the Tooth of M, which for some weeks had been one of our projects. We slept in an inn and left the next day, not too early, at some undetermined hour (Sandro did not like watches: he felt their quiet continuous admonishment to be an arbitrary intrusion). We plunged boldly into the fog and came out of it about one o'clock, in gleaming sunlight and on the big crest of a peak which was not the right one. I then said that we should be able to go down about a hundred metres, cross over halfway up the mountain, and go up along the next ridge: or, better yet, since we were already there, continue climbing and be satisfied with the wrong peak, which in any case was only forty metres lower than the right one. But Sandro, with splendid bad faith, said in a few dense syllables that my last proposal was fine, but from there "by way of the easy northwest ridge" (this was a sarcastic quotation from the above-mentioned Alpine Club guide) we could also reach the Tooth of M. in half an hour; and what was the point of being twenty if you couldn't permit yourself the luxury of taking the wrong route.

THE EASY RIDGE must really have been easy, indeed elementary in the summer; but we found it in a very discomforting state. The rock was wet on the side facing the sun and covered with a black layer of ice in the shade: between one large outcrop of rock and another lay pockets of melting snow into which we sank to our waists. We reached the top at five; I dragged myself along so pitifully that it was painful, while Sandro was seized by a sinister hilarity that I found very annoying.

"And how do we get down?"

"As for getting down, we shall see", he replied, and added mysteriously: "The worst that can happen is to have to taste bear meat." Well, we tasted bear meat in the course of that night, which seemed very, very long. We got down in two hours, helped badly by the rope, which was frozen; it had become a malignant, rigid tangle that snagged on each projection and rang against the rock face like a cable of a funicular. At seven we were on the bank of a frozen pond and it was dark. We ate the little that was left, built a useless dry-stone wall facing the wind, and lay down on the ground to sleep, pressed to each other. It was as though time itself had frozen; every so often we got to our feet to reactivate our circulation, and it was always the same time: the wind never stopped blowing, there was always the same ghost of a moon, always at the same point in the sky, and in front of the moon passed a fantastic cavalcade of tattered clouds, always the same. We had taken off our shoes, as described in Lammer's books, so dear to Sandro, and we kept our feet in our packs; at the first funereal light, which seemed to seep from the snow and not the sky, we rose with our limbs benumbed and our eyes glittering from lack of sleep, hunger, and the hardness of our bed. And we found our shoes so frozen that they rang like bells, and to get them on we had to hatch them out like brood hens.

But we went back down to the valley under our own steam; and to the innkeeper who asked us, with a snicker, how things had gone, and meanwhile was staring at our wild, exalted faces, we answered flippantly that we had had an excellent outing, then paid the bill and departed with dignity. This was it—the bear meat; and now that many years have passed, I regret that I ate so little of it, for nothing has had, even distantly, the taste of that meat, which is the taste of being strong and free, free also to make mistakes and be the master of one's destiny. That is why I am grateful to Sandro for having led me consciously into trouble, on that trip and other undertakings which were only apparently foolish, and I am certain that they helped me later on.

They didn't help Sandro, or not for long. Sandro was

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Sandro Delmastro, the first man to be killed fighting in the Resistance with the Action Party's Piedmontese Military Command. After a few months of extreme tension, in April 1944 he was captured by the Fascists, did not surrender, and tried to escape from the Fascist Party house in Cuneo. He was killed with a tommy-gun burst in the back of the neck by a monstrous child-executioner, one of those wretched murderers of fifteen whom Mussolini's Republic of Salò recruited in the reformatories. His body was abandoned in the road for a long time, because the Fascists had forbidden the population to bury him.

TODAY I KNOW that it is a hopeless task to try to dress a man in words, make him live again on the printed page, especially a man like Sandro. He was not the sort of person you can tell stories about, nor to whom one erects monuments—he who laughed at all monuments: he lived completely in his deeds, and when they were over nothing of him remains—nothing but words, precisely.

Potassium

19 K potassium	20 Ca calcium
37 Rb rubidium	38 Sr strontium

IN JANUARY 1941 the fate of Europe and the world seemed to be sealed. Only the deluded could still think that Germany would not win; the stolid English "had not noticed that they had lost the game", and obstinately resisted under the bombings; but they were alone and suffered bloody losses on all fronts. Only a voluntarily deaf and blind man could have any doubts about the fate reserved for the Jews in a German Europe: we had read Feuchtwanger's *Oppermanns*, smuggled secretly in from France, and a British White Book, which arrived from Palestine and described the "Nazi atrocities"; we had only believed half of it, but that was enough. Many refugees from Poland and France had reached Italy, and we had talked with them: they did not know the details of the slaughters that were taking place behind a monstrous curtain of silence, but each of them was a messenger, like those who run to Job to tell him, "I alone have escaped to tell you the story."

And yet, if we wanted to live, if we wished in some way to take advantage of the youth coursing through our veins, there was indeed no other resource than self-imposed blindness; like the English, "we did not notice", we pushed all dangers into the limbo of things not perceived or immediately forgotten. We could also, in the abstract, throw everything away and escape and be transplanted to some remote, mythical country, chosen from among the few that kept their frontiers open: Madagascar, British Honduras. But to do this one needed a lot of money and a fabulous capacity for initiative—and I, my family, and our friends had neither one nor the other. Besides, if looked at from close by and in detail, things did not after all seem so disastrous: the Italy around us, or, to put it more accurately (at a time when one travelled little), Piedmont and Turin were not hostile. Piedmont was our true country, the one in which we recognised ourselves: the mountains around Turin, visible on clear days, and within reach of a bicycle, were ours, irreplaceable, and had taught us fatigue, endurance, and a certain wisdom. In short, our roots were in Piedmont and Turin, not enormous but deep, extensive, and fantastically intertwined.

Neither in us nor, more generally, in our generation, whether "Aryan" or Jew, had the idea yet gained ground that one must and could resist Fascism. Our resistance at the time was passive and was limited to rejection, isolation, and avoiding contamination. The seed of active struggle had not survived down to us, it had been stifled a few years before with the final sweep of the scythe, which had relegated to prison, house arrest, exile, or silence the last Turinese protagonists and witnesses—Einaudi, Ginzburg, Monti, Vittorio Foa, Zini, Carlo Levi. These names said nothing to us, we knew hardly anything about them—the Fascism around us did not have opponents. We had to begin from scratch, "invent" our anti-Fascism, create it from the germ, from the roots, from our roots. We looked around us and travelled up roads that led not very far away. The Bible, Croce, geometry, and physics seemed to us sources of certainty.

We gathered in the gym of the Talmud Torah—in the School of the Law, as the very old Hebrew elementary school was proudly called—and taught each other to find again in the Bible justice and injustice and the strength that overcomes injustice; to recognise the new oppressors in Ahasuerus and Nebuchadnezzar. But where was Kadosh Barukhú, "The Saint, Blessed be He": he who breaks the slaves' chains and submerges the Egyptians' chariots? He who dictated the Law to Moses, and inspired the liberators Ezra and Nehemiah, no longer inspired anyone; the sky above us was silent and empty: he allowed the Polish ghettos to be exterminated, and slowly, confusedly, the idea was making headway in us that we were alone, that we had no allies we could count on, neither on earth nor in heaven, that we would have to find in ourselves the strength to resist. Therefore the impulse that drove us to explore our limits was not completely absurd: to travel hundreds of kilometres on our bikes, to climb with fury and patience up rock walls that we did not know very well, to subject ourselves voluntarily to hunger, cold, and fatigue, to train ourselves to endure and to make decisions. A piton goes in or it doesn't; the rope holds or it doesn't: these too were sources of certainty.

CHEMISTRY, FOR ME, had stopped being such a source. It led to the heart of Matter, and Matter was our ally precisely because the Spirit, dear to Fascism, was our enemy; but, having reached the fourth year of Pure

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Chemistry, I could no longer ignore the fact that chemistry itself, or at least that which we were being administered, did not answer my questions. To prepare phenyl bromide or methyl violet according to Gattermann was amusing, even exhilarating, but not very much different from following Artusi's recipes. Why in that particular way and not in another? After having been force-fed in *liceo* the truths revealed by Fascist Doctrine, all revealed, unproven truths either bored me stiff or aroused my suspicion. Did chemistry theorems exist? No: therefore you had to go further, not be satisfied with the *quia*, go back to the origins, to mathematics and physics. The origins of chemistry were ignoble, or at least equivocal: the dens of the alchemists, their abominable hodgepodge of ideas and language, their confessed interest in gold, their Levantine swindles typical of charlatans or magicians; instead, at the origin of physics lay the strenuous clarity of the West—Archimedes and Euclid. I would become a physicist, *ruat coelum*: perhaps without a degree, since Hitler and Mussolini forbade it.

A brief course of exercises in physics formed part of the fourth-year chemistry programme: simple measurements of viscosity, surface tension, rotatory power, and suchlike exercises. The course was conducted by a young assistant, thin, tall, a bit hunched over, polite, and extraordinarily shy, who behaved in a way that we were not used to. Our other teachers, almost without exception, showed themselves convinced of the importance and excellence of the subject they taught; some of them were in good faith, for others it was evidently a matter of personal supremacy, of their private hunting grounds. That assistant, however, almost had the air of apologising to us, of ranging himself on our side: in his somewhat embarrassed and well-bred ironic smile, one seemed to read: "I too know that with this antiquated and worn-out equipment you'll not be able to put together anything useful, and that furthermore these are all marginal futilities, and knowledge lives elsewhere; but this is a trade that you and I too must work at—so please try not to do much damage and learn as much as you can." In short, all the girls in the course fell in love with him.

During the span of those months I made desperate attempts to be taken on as a student assistant by this or that professor. Some of them snidely or even arrogantly told me that the racial laws prohibited it; others fell back on hazy and flimsy excuses. After having imperturbably collected the fourth or fifth rejection, I was going home one evening on my bike, with an almost palpable load of disheartenment and bitterness on my back. I was pedalling listlessly up Via Valperga Caluso, while from the Valentino Park gusts of freezing wind overtook and passed me; it was night by now, and the light of the street lamps, covered with purple for the blackout, did not prevail over the mist and darkness. The passers-by were few and hurried; and then suddenly one among them caught my attention. He was going in my direction with a long, slow stride, he wore a long black overcoat, and his head was bare. He was walking a bit hunched over and looked like the assistant—it was the assistant. I passed him, uncertain as to what I should do; then I plucked up my courage, went back, and once again did not dare speak to him. What did I know about him? Nothing. He could be indifferent, a hypocrite, even an enemy. Then I thought that I risked nothing but another rejection, and without beating around the bush I asked him whether it would be possible to be accepted for experimental work in his school. The assistant looked at me with surprise; and instead of going into the long explanation I expected, he replied with two words from the Gospel: "Follow me."

THE INSIDE OF the Institute of Experimental Physics was full of dust and century-old ghosts. There were rows of glass-doored cupboards packed with slips of paper, yellowed and gnawed by mice and paper moths: these were the observations of eclipses, registrations of earthquakes, meteorological bulletins from well into the last century. Along the walls of one corridor I found an extraordinary trumpet, more than thirty feet long, whose origin, purpose, and use no one any longer knew—perhaps it was to announce the Day of Judgment, when all that which is hidden will appear. There was an Aeolipyle in Secession style, a Hero's fountain, and a whole obsolete and prolix fauna of contraptions for generations destined for classroom demonstrations: a pathetic and ingenuous form of minor physics, in which stage setting counts for more than concept. It is neither illusionism nor conjuring trick but borders on them.

The assistant welcomed me in the tiny room on the ground floor where he himself lived, and which was bristling with a much different sort of equipment, unknown and exciting enthusiasm. Some molecules are carriers of an electrical dipole; they behave in short in an electrical field like minuscule compass needles: they orient themselves, some more sluggishly, others less so. Depending on conditions, they obey certain laws with greater or less respect. Well, now, these devices served to clarify those conditions and that inadequate respect. They were waiting for someone to put them to use; he was busy with other matters (astrophysics, he specified, and the information shook me to the marrow: so I had an astrophysicist right in front of me, in flesh and blood!) and besides he had no experience with certain manipulations which were considered necessary to purify the products that had to be measured; for this a chemist was necessary, and I was the welcomed chemist. He willingly handed over the field to me and the instruments. The field was two square metres of a table and desk; the instruments, a small family, but the most important were the Westphal balance and the heterodyne. The first I already knew; with the second I soon established a friendship. In substance it was a radio-receiving apparatus, built to reveal the slightest differences in frequency; and in fact, it went howlingly out of tune and barked like a watchdog simply if the operator shifted in his chair or moved a hand, or if someone just came into the room. Besides, at certain hours of the day, it revealed a whole intricate universe of mysterious messages, Morse tickings, modulated hisses, and deformed, mangled human voices, which pronounced sentences in incomprehensible languages, or others in Italian, but they were senseless sentences, in code. It was the radiophonic Babel of the War, messages of death transmitted by ships or planes from God knows who to

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God knows whom, beyond the mountains and the sea.

Beyond the mountains and the sea, the assistant explained to me, there was a scholar named Onsager, about whom he knew nothing except that he had worked out an equation that claimed to describe the behaviour of polar molecules under all conditions, provided that they were in a liquid state. The equation functioned well for diluted solutions; it did not appear that anyone had bothered to verify it for concentrated solutions, pure polar liquids, and mixtures of the latter. This was the work that he proposed I do, to prepare a series of complex liquids and check if they obeyed Onsager's equation, which I accepted with indiscriminate enthusiasm. As a first step, I would have to do something he did not know how to do: at that time it was not easy to find pure products for analysis, and I was supposed to devote myself for a few weeks to purifying benzene, chlorobenzene, chlorophenols, amminophenols, toluidines, and more.

A FEW HOURS of contact were sufficient for the assistant's personality to become clearly defined. He was thirty, was recently married, came from Trieste but was of Greek origin, knew four languages, loved music, Huxley, Ibsen, Conrad, and Thomas Mann, the last so dear to me. He also loved physics, but he was suspicious of every activity that set itself a goal: therefore, he was nobly lazy and, naturally, detested Fascism.

His relationship to physics perplexed me. He did not hesitate to harpoon my last hippogriff, confirming quite explicitly that message about "marginal futility" which we had read in his eyes in the lab. Not only those humble exercises of ours but physics as a whole was marginal, by its nature, by vocation, in so far as it set itself the task of regulating the universe of appearances, whereas the truth, the reality, the intimate essence of things and man exist elsewhere, hidden behind a veil or seven veils (I don't remember exactly). He was a physicist, more precisely an astrophysicist, diligent and eager but without illusions: the Truth lay beyond, inaccessible to our telescopes, accessible to the initiates. This was a long road which he was travelling with effort, wonderment, and profound joy. Physics was prose: elegant gymnastics for the mind, mirror of Creation, the key to man's domination over the planet; but what is the stature of Creation, of man and the planet? His road was long and he had barely started up it, but I was his disciple: Did I want to follow him?

It was a terrifying request. To be the assistant's disciple was for me an enjoyment of every minute, a never before experienced bond, without shadows, rendered more intense by the certainty that the relationship was mutual: I, a Jew, excluded and made sceptical by recent upheavals, the enemy of violence but not yet caught up in the necessity of an opposed violence, I should be for him the ideal interlocutor, a white sheet on which any message could be inscribed.

I did not mount the new gigantic hippogriff which the assistant offered me. During those months the Germans destroyed Belgrade, broke the Greek resistance, invaded Crete from the air: that was the Truth, that was the Reality. There were no escape routes, or not for me. Better to remain on the Earth, playing with the dipoles for lack of anything better, purify benzene and prepare for an unknown but imminent and certainly tragic future. To purify benzene, then, under the conditions to which the War and the bombings had reduced the Institute was not an insignificant undertaking: the assistant declared that I had *carte blanche*, I could rummage everywhere from basement to attic, appropriate any instrument or product, but I could not buy anything, even he couldn't, it was a régime of absolute autarchy.

In the basement I found a huge demijohn of technical benzene, at 95% purity, better than nothing, but the manuals prescribed rectifying it and then putting it through a final distillation in the presence of sodium, to free it from the last traces of humidity. To rectify means to distil by fractions, discarding the fractions that boil lower or higher than prescribed, and gathering the "heart", which must boil at a constant temperature: I found in the inexhaustible basement the necessary glassware, including one of those Vigreux distillation columns, as pretty as a piece of lace, the product of superhuman patience and ability on the part of the glass-blower, but (be it said between us) of debatable efficiency; I made the double boiler with a small aluminium pot.

DISTILLING IS BEAUTIFUL. First of all, because it is a slow, philosophic, and silent occupation, which keeps you busy but gives you time to think of other things, somewhat like riding a bike. Then, because it involves a metamorphosis from liquid to vapour (invisible), and from this once again to liquid; but in this double journey, up and down, purity is attained, an ambiguous and fascinating condition, which starts with chemistry and goes very far. And finally, when you set about distilling, you acquire the consciousness of repeating a ritual consecrated by the centuries, almost a religious act, in which from imperfect material you obtain the essence, the *usia*, the spirit, and in the first place alcohol, which gladdens the spirit and warms the heart. I took two good days to obtain a fraction of satisfying purity: for this operation, since I had to work with an open flame, I had voluntarily exiled myself to a small room on the second floor, deserted and empty and far from any human presence.

Now I had to distil a second time in the presence of sodium. Sodium is a degenerated metal: it is indeed a metal only in the chemical significance of the word, certainly not in that of everyday language. It is neither rigid nor elastic; rather it is soft like wax; it is not shiny or, better, it is shiny only if preserved with maniacal care, since otherwise it reacts in a few instants with air, covering itself with an ugly rough rind: with even greater rapidity it reacts with water, in which it floats (a metal that floats!), dancing frenetically and developing hydrogen. I ransacked the entrails of the Institute in vain: like Ariosto's Astolfo on the Moon I found dozens of labelled ampoules, hundreds of abstruse compounds, other vague anonymous sediments apparently untouched for generations, but not a sign of sodium. Instead I found a small phial of potassium: potassium is sodium's twin,

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so I grabbed it and returned to my hermitage.

I put in the flask of benzene a lump of potassium, "as large as half a pea"—so said the manual—and diligently distilled the contents: towards the end of the operation I dutifully doused the flame, took apart the apparatus, let the small amount of liquid in the flask cool off a bit, and then with a long pointed stick skewered the "half pea" of potassium and lifted it out.

Potassium, as I said, is sodium's twin, but it reacts with air and water with even greater energy: it is known to everyone (and was known also to me) that in contact with water it not only develops hydrogen but also ignites. So I handled my "half pea" like a holy relic: I placed it on a piece of dry filter-paper, wrapped it up in it, went down into the Institute's courtyard, dug out a tiny grave, and buried the little bedevilled corpse. I carefully tamped down the earth above it and went back up to my work.

I took the now empty flask, put it under a faucet, and turned on the water. I heard a rapid thump and from the neck of the flask came a flash of flame directed at the window that was next to the wash-basin and the curtains around it caught fire. While I was stumbling around looking for some even primitive means to extinguish it, the panels of the shutter began to blister and the room was now full of smoke. I managed to push over a chair and tear down the curtains; I threw them on the floor and stomped furiously on them, while the smoke half-blinded me and my blood was throbbing violently in my temples.

WHEN IT WAS ALL OVER, when the incandescent tatters were extinguished, I remained standing there for a few minutes, weak and stunned, my knees turned to water, contemplating the vestiges of the disaster without seeing them. As soon as I got my breath back, I went to the floor below and told the assistant what had happened. If it is true that there is no greater sorrow than to remember a happy time in a state of misery, it is just as true that calling up a moment of anguish in a tranquil mood, seated quietly at one's desk, is a source of profound satisfaction.

The assistant listened to my account with polite attention but with a questioning look: Who had compelled me to embark on that voyage, and to distil benzene by going to so much trouble? In a way, it served me right: these are the things that happen to the profane, to those who dawdle and play before the portals of the temple instead of going inside. But he didn't say a word; he resorted for the occasion (unwillingly, as always) to the hierarchical distance and pointed out to me that an empty flask does not catch fire: so it must not have been empty. It must have contained, if nothing else, the vapour of the benzene, besides of course the air that came in through its neck. But one has never seen the vapour of benzene, when cold, catch fire by itself: only the potassium could have set fire to the mixture, and I had taken out the potassium. All of it?

All, I answered, but then I was visited by a doubt, returned to the scene of the accident, and found fragments of the flask still on the floor: on one of them, by looking closely, one could see, barely visible, a tiny white fleck. I tested it with phenolphthalein: it was basic, it was potassium hydroxide. The guilty party had been found: adherring to the glass of the flask there must have remained a minuscule particle of potassium, all that was needed to react with the water I had poured in and set fire to the benzene vapours.

The assistant looked at me with an amused, vaguely ironic expression: better not to do than to do, better to meditate than to act, better his astrophysics, the threshold of the Unknowable, than my chemistry, a mess compounded of stenches, explosions, and small futile mysteries. I thought of another moral, more down to earth and concrete, and I believe that every militant chemist can confirm it: that one must distrust the almost-the-same (sodium is almost the same as potassium, but with sodium nothing would have happened), the practically identical, the approximate, the or-even, all surrogates, and all patchwork. The differences can be small, but they can lead to radically different consequences, like a railroad's switch points; the chemist's trade consists in good part in being aware of these differences, knowing them close up, and foreseeing their effects. And not only the chemist's trade.

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Two Bagatelles

1. A Martian Haiku

Departure Boards at
Waterloo flick their packs like
impatient gamblers.

2. Clerihew: Delius

Delius
didn't believe in the Pater or Filius—
and he wouldn't have thanked us
for the Spiritus Sanctus.

Gavin Ewart

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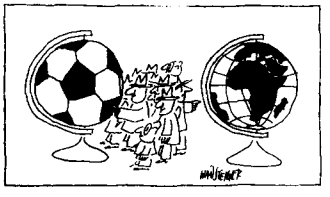
Jeffrey Richards

The Hooligan Culture

Violence & the Ethic of the Undermass



A NEW FOOTBALL season has begun with Britain's national game in crisis. It is not just the absence of radio and television coverage, the falling attendance, the precarious financial position of most of the clubs: it is that the game is haunted by 39 unquiet souls, the souls of the innocent fans "massacred" at the Brussels Heysel Stadium in May.

Millions of viewers around the world switching on to watch a European cup final between Liverpool and Juventus witnessed the appalling spectacle of a horde of drunken British fans invading the Italian end of the ground and causing a terrified stampede in which 39 people died. The Belgian police, apparently expecting nothing but a joyous sporting festival, looked on in helpless bewilderment. Condemnation from around the globe was swift and total. The amazement was even greater. For was it not the British who had invented the concept of good sportsmanship, and given the world such phrases as "playing the game", "not letting the side down", "keeping a straight bat", "it's not cricket"—all of them expressions of a national ideology whose key elements were fair play, keeping a stiff upper lip, and doing the decent thing?

Successive generations all over the world had been raised on constant cinematic incarnations of such hardy perennials as Beau Geste, the Scarlet Pimpernel and Bulldog Drummond (transformed in films from a vicious thug to a gentleman-adventurer). These had become standard archetypes of the Englishman and their enduring power is eloquent testimony to the myth-making power of the movies. What on earth had become, commentators asked, of the civilised, tolerant, old-fashioned but basically decent people the British had once been? The same question was being asked in Britain, where there was a profound sense of national shame, made all the more anguished by the fact that the majority felt that it was a "small minority" which were not only destroying football but also Britain's reputation abroad.

The nation willingly, almost gratefully, accepted the hair shirt of ostracism from international competition, anxious to be seen to do public penance. The Prime Minister pledged herself to eliminate football "hooliganism." But the measures to which she has leant her support (the banning of alcoholic drinks in the stadium grounds, the banning of "away" visiting supporters for some matches, identity cards for all supporting fans, the withdrawal of "football special" trains) do not begin to tackle the problem. For the potential hooligan is just as happy to fight outside the ground as inside, can obtain his drink at a wide variety of places, and can travel by ordinary scheduled public transport. Already this season the opening match at Liverpool's Anfield Ground saw an attempt to hold a short service of remembrance for the Brussels dead—broken up by the ritualised obscene chanting of a wholly unrepentant hard core. What motivates them? Why do they act as they do?

I COME TO THE QUESTION as a lifelong football supporter, my undying allegiance pledged to Aston Villa, one of England's oldest and most prestigious clubs (seven times F.A. Cup winners, seven times League champions, most recently in 1981). One of my books is dedicated to the members of the Villa team which provided some of my most exhilarating memories. Football is a passion not only for me but for many. For die-hard supporters the team is a source of pride and self-respect, the recipient of the deepest and most profound emotions. Defeat, or worse, humiliation, for the team sends shock waves through the collective psyche of the faithful. I can understand, therefore, the reactions of those fans of once-mighty First-Division giants, Sheffield Wednesday, when they faced relegation to the Third Division in the mid-1970s. One Wednesday fan, whose house was painted in the team colours, emigrated to Australia; another, aged 18, committed suicide. I have lain awake at nights worrying about team selection and the potential sale of my heroes. But never once have I been tempted to strike a rival supporter.

I have, however, seen the face of the "hooligan" at close quarters. Fighting on the terraces, usually when the visitors manage to infiltrate the home end, is a not uncommon occurrence. But at a local match between Villa and nearby West Bromwich Albion at Villa Park, I was on the stand near to where an Albion supporter had infiltrated himself. As the game got underway, he stood up and turned to face the crowd. He was clearly the worse for drink and his face was suffused with almost manic hatred. He taunted and abused people in the crowd, seeking to provoke a fight and becoming increasingly demented until the police intervened to manhandle him away. What I remember about him is the hatred he displayed. But hatred of *whom*? Of people who

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were effectively his neighbours, people who lived and worked in the same city. It was noticeable that he had shown no interest whatever in the game. He was interested only in "*aggro*." But "*aggro*" requires an enemy; and so an enemy had been manufactured artificially out of supporters for a rival club. Then hatred, fuelled and released by drink, had been directed against them.

Hate is very important to the "hooligan" and is stimulated by one of the most popular of ritual chants: "*We hate Nottingham Forest, we hate Albion too, we hate Birmingham City, but Villa we love you!*" is the Villa version. Football clubs had become avenues of group identification in the vast anonymity of the Victorian industrial cities, outlets for enthusiasm, for devotion, for dreams and for fantasies. By the end of the 1960s this had been perverted by the use of group identification to validate an ethic in which personality, masculinity, and status were defined by a record of, and prowess in, violence.

THIS PROVIDES PERHAPS both a key and a chronology for explaining how violence has attached itself to football. By almost any definition, the appeal of football is capable of being distorted into a justification for violence. The one exception is the powerful aesthetic appeal that it exerts for me and for the more traditional fan, the connoisseur of the game. Football at its best has the grace, the speed, the power, the control of pure athleticism. There is a deeply satisfying geometric precision in perfect passing, a miraculous excitement in the execution of complex, multi-faceted moves, an emotional thrill in dramatic changes of pace and direction and sudden displays of instinctive understanding, skill, and perception. It is this which feeds the old-fashioned freemasonry of the grandstand and the terraces, where one engages with the rival supporters in informed, almost scientific, always appreciative discussion of skills, tactics and playing talent. This I have done up and down the country from Sunderland to Chelsea. It is something of which the "hooligan" seems to have no understanding.

There are other aspects of the game, however, of more appeal to the "hooligan." Anthropologists, such as Dr Desmond Morris in his study entitled *The Soccer Tribe* (1981), see football as a form of both ritualised hunt and stylised battle. It is a substitute for warfare, much like the medieval tournament, in which the skill, speed, prowess, and stamina necessary for the real thing are tested and honed in organised imitations under rules. Territory is invaded, skirmishes are staged, attacks and retreats occur, until the enemy citadel is pierced and victory is achieved. For some, perhaps for many, this substitute warfare is cathartic, allowing vicarious participation in conflict which purges the instinct for violence. For others, however, it can be a spur to their own aggression, an occasion for the expression of their own violence.

THERE IS A SENSE too in which football became for some a universal substitute. In the 1960s patriotism became unfashionable. The working class, as George Orwell perceptively noted, has always been profoundly patriotic, and that instinct, that desire for identification with something outside yourself, something to respect, to love and to express support for, was for some transferred to the team and in the process distorted. Thus the national anthem became "*God save our gracious team.*" The hymn of hate "*We hate Nottingham Forest*", etc is sung to the tune *Land of Hope and Glory*. The Union Jack flags waved from the terraces bear the initials of the club.

AS THE memorable Bill Shankly, manager of Liverpool, was fond of saying: "People tell me that football is a matter of life and death—it isn't! It's more important than that. . . ." So football has become a substitute for religion. Nothing is more symptomatic of this than the eclipse of *Abide with me*. This hymn, the crystallisation of the Christian ethic, was annually sung at the Wembley Cup Final, and there were few more moving sounds than to hear 100,000 voices raised in unison in Henry Francis Lyte's words: "*Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory? I triumph still if Thou abide with me.*" It must have had a particular poignancy for those who had lived through the Second World War. By the 1960s it was being shouted down and drowned out by obscene chants and it was eventually abandoned; and although later revived in abbreviated form, it is now an empty and half-hearted ritual. Instead of a communal expression of a faith transcending all earthly differences, there is now a jostling host of rival anthems: Birmingham City's "*Keep right on to the end of the road*", West Ham's "*I'm forever blowing bubbles*", Liverpool's "*When the reds go marching in*" and "*You'll never walk alone*", and Villa's "*Holte Enders in the Sky.*" They may be profane in intent but the imagery is all of heaven, eternity, saints and angels—the appropriation of the vocabulary of salvation by a plethora of semi-pagan conventicles whose gods are star players who earn chants like "*Brian Little walks on water*" and "*We all agree Kenny Dalglish is magic.*" Hymn tunes have been pressed into service (*Amazing Grace*, for instance, to chant a successful manager's name). There are several well-attested stories of people making testamentary instructions to have their ashes scattered in the goal mouth at the Kop end of Anfield. As organised religion decayed, so the regular Saturday afternoon expression of the faith took the place of Sunday. But as with many other religions, team worship has had its violent acolytes, only too prepared to put to the sword the devotees of a rival cult.

Freudians could point to the sexual connotations of the game. Tension builds up among the spectators during the extended foreplay of the build-up to the goal. Long balls from the back are pumped forward and stroked around the midfield. Fondled and caressed by the strikers, they are then thrust forward in a final savage arc to slice into the back of the net. The players kiss and embrace in ecstasy, the spectators leap shouting to their feet; then the tension relaxes and, drenched in sweat and suffused with a warm glow of satisfaction, they sink back into their seats. But, again for a minority, sex is inextricably associated with violence.

Football manifestly can provide a focus or outlet for violence. But the game is not the cause.

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Bully-Boys & Jingos

"FOOTBALL HOOLIGANISM" is a misnomer, which is at once misleading and dangerously restrictive. For "hooliganism" has nothing intrinsically to do with football, and the violent episodes we have seen regularly at soccer matches at home and abroad, culminating in the shaming spectacle of the Brussels tragedy, are far more than mere rowdyism. They are manifestations of gang warfare, a phenomenon that has long existed within British society, but attached itself to football in the 1960s. The idea that it is a problem of the sport and that the beleaguered football authorities should or even can do anything about it is an absurd oversimplification. It is much more profoundly a question of the social values and cultural norms of society at large, and it is to that complex and deep-seated problem that our rulers and opinion leaders should be turning their attention.

Historically, there is nothing surprising about the events in Brussels. What is new is that they are happening abroad and that they are receiving the full glare of publicity in the world media. But ever since the emergence of modern industrial society in the 19th century there has been a violent undermass in British society, a section of the urban working class, dubbed by the Victorians "*the roughs*", to distinguish them from the "*respectable*" working class. Where the latter adopted the middle-class ethics of hard work, self-improvement, decency, decorum and education, the former settled for drink, violence, and instant gratification. The younger members of this undermass formed themselves into groups, who fought for territorial control of the streets, prized toughness and rejected established authority and behaviour. This went on beyond the 19th century and could be seen in the inner working-class areas of any big city even in the comparatively peaceful decades of the 1930s and the 1950s.[1]

This form of behaviour has been variously attributed to "cultural deprivation", to poverty, and to class rebellion. None of these explanations, however, entirely covers its survival intact into the era of working-class affluence in the 1960s, when it first began to be exported to the European Continent with the arrival of cheap package holidays—particularly to Spain. The young British holiday-makers who have become a byword for drunkenness, violence, and loutishness are but another manifestation of the phenomenon we saw at the Heysel Stadium where 39 soccer fans (mostly Italian) died. Both the Brussels rioters and the Costa Brava bully-boys are exponents of a particular form of masculinity, which is defined essentially by how hard you are and how much you can drink. This brand of British masculinity when exported to the Continent also embraces a raucous and offensive jingoism.

J. A. Hobson's classic definition of jingoism is particularly apropos here:

> "an inverted patriotism whereby the love of one's own nation is transformed into the hatred of another nation, and the fierce craving to destroy the individual members of that other nation . . . the glorification of brute force, and an ignorant contempt for foreigners . . . the passion of the mob . . . sensationalism."

The credulity, brutality and vainglory that Hobson discerned as key elements of jingoism are all present in the make-up of the football "hooligan." But the humourlessness he also detected is absent and this gives rather greater cause for concern. One of the primary motivations of the "hooligan" is the eternal search for the "good laugh." "A good laugh" can be obtained from outwitting the authorities, violent horseplay, or, best of all, knocking seven bells out of someone.

The evidence clearly suggests that the bulk of football "hooligans" are and have been the product of the "rough" working class, and careful sociological research has established the culture of the young men of this class—"the lads", as they are known. One exemplary study of their attitudes and psychology is Paul Willis's *Learning to Labour* (1977). It is based on a case study, undertaken between 1972 and 1975, of a group of non-academic working-class "lads" at a boys' secondary-modern school in a Midlands industrial town. The group is all-important, given coherence by its oppositional stance to the system and its values. Their philosophy is instant gratification: "We wanna live for now . . . we wanna live while we're young, want money to go out with . . . wanna go with women now, wanna have cars now. . . ." At school, their rejection of the system involves bringing to a fine art the processes of "dossing" (doing nothing), "blagging" (talking their way out of things), and "wagging" (truancy).

Willis traces the emergence among them of a distinctive counter-culture, a world-view marked by virulent racism, entrenched sexism, and an emphasis on *macho* masculinity which is seen to entail heavy drinking, the successful defiance of "authority", sexual prowess with women, and, in particular, violence. The ability to "handle oneself" is a prime qualification for membership of "the lads." One of the "lads" described their method of fighting:

> "There's no chivalry or nothing, none of this cobblers you know, it's just . . . if you're gonna fight, it's savage fighting anyway, so you might as well go all the way to win it completely, by having someone else help you or by winning by the dirtiest methods you can think of, like poking his eyes out or biting his ear and things like this."

Herein lie the seeds of the "hooligan" culture.

WHAT IS WORRYING ABOUT IT is not so much that it exists, for as I have been suggesting it has always existed in modern urban society; it is that it has become the dominant cultural ideology of today's young. Its cultural dominance stems, like so much in present-day society, from the 1960s when the previously dominant ethic was eclipsed and at the same time those institutional constraints which had hitherto contained the violent sub-group were dismantled or discredited.

[1] Geoffrey Pearson, *Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears* (1983); Stephen Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels?* (1981).

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Indiscipline . . . Illiteracy

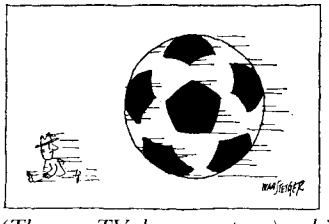
THE 1960s SAW a profound social and cultural revolution, crystallising changes which had been forming since the late 1950s and determining the development of Britain for the next several decades.[2] It was marked by a series of reforms whose consequences have in many cases been disastrous.

First, working-class communities, rooted in defined networks of inner-city streets, grouped around recognised social centres like the pub, revolving around the central institution of the extended family, were broken up by reckless and ill-considered redevelopment plans. City centres were ripped out and left as desolate wastelands, their populations shipped to bleak tower-block estates where no sense of

[2] The best account of this revolution is Christopher Booker's, *The Neophiliacs* (1969).

The Urban Tribes of Shame

Meet "the Lads"



SO PERSISTENT *is the history of mob violence that, if football hooliganism were to disappear, some other form of hooliganism would rapidly take its place. This, at least, was the unspoken moral of* **Hooligan** *(Thames TV documentary), which manged to move beyond the predictable remarks of various "concerned" parties by interviewing the hooligans.*

On this occasion they were the young Londoners who support West Ham United and are known as the "ICF" or "Inter-City Firm". There was nothing particularly modernized about them, however, and one of them said revealingly "We fight only people like ourselves." In other words, they are a small urban tribe for whom the game of football is only one readily available form of identity.

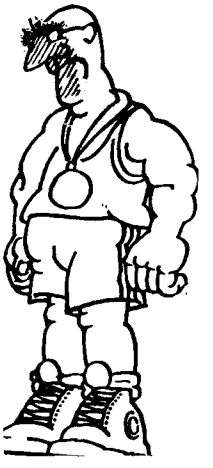
THIS WAS **an interesting documentary precisely because it questioned the offenders themselves—although the novelty of presentation was somewhat modified by the presence of several sociologists who explained and seemed almost to excuse the conduct of "the lads" (as one of the academics persisted in calling them) in terms of social context and "working-class culture". You would almost think they approved of hooliganism, if only as a nice example of their theories.**

But certain facts did emerge in the course of the programme. The hooligans tend to be well dressed, and characteristically in employment (some of them with such ordinary burdens as mortgages). They are not affected either by excessive drink or by the propaganda of the National Front; and apparently they are well organized by their leaders. And, although they are brutal and thuggish, they are not necessarily illiterate as well. Some of them even managed to find explanations for their behaviour which were not dissimilar from those of the sociologists. "It's more important to be loyal to your mates" was one of the cant phrases repeated with a score of other clichés.

WHAT THEIR CONDUCT **amounts to, however, is crowd savagery and irrational mob violence no different from that of the fascist mobs in pre-War Germany or the lynch parties of the Old South. The fact that such violence is now inextricably associated with the conduct of the English overseas makes it all the more abhorrent. It has nothing to do with "working-class culture"—or at least, if it does, that "culture" is worth less than nothing.**

Peter Ackroyd
in THE TIMES (*London*)

Hooligans as Marksmen



*IT was after a very rowdy August Bank Holiday weekend in 1898 that the word "***hooligan***" first appeared in the British Press. The origins of the word are obscure, but it featured in a music-hall song of the 1890s which described the high-spirited activities of an anarchic Irish family. In any event it quickly established itself as the normal word to describe any young ruffian or member of a street gang.*

From the earliest Press reports it is clear that the word was not regarded by the roughs themselves as a term of abuse but as a label to be proud of. One of the first times it appeared in print was in an edition of the "Daily News" of August, 1898:

"The constable said the prisoner belonged to a gang of young roughs, calling themselves 'hooligans'."

Little has changed since then, except that hooliganism has by now become identified almost exclusively with the game of football.

THE WORD **was associated from the start with a bewildering phenomenon which people could only attempt to explain in terms of social deprivation.**

Nowadays, London is somewhat less vile and miasmatic than it used to be, but it is still routine practice to search for the causes of Hooliganism among the social problems of the moment, of which the most serious now is unemployment. It is not surprising that unemployment should be blamed. Among British youth—that is, people under 25—there are 1.2 million unemployed, or about 23% of the labour force in that age group. Many of them are bound to feel deeply frustrated. Frustration breeds bitterness, and bitterness can breed violence.

AFTER THE MASSACRE *of Italians by Liverpool supporters in Brussels last May, the "experts" were very quick to draw the obvious conclusions. One of them was quoted in "Time" magazine, which chose unemployment in Europe as its cover story. A French sociologist confidently blamed the Brussels disaster on "a social crisis" caused by the high rate of unemployment in Liverpool. It was, he added,*

"a form of revenge on destiny for those young people who have no hope."

Last week Independent Television broadcast a Thames documentary called *Hooligan*, timed to coincide with the opening of the football season.

The programme concentrated on a London East End gang of some 400 West Ham supporters called the "Inter-

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community or, more important, communal sanction on youthful wrongdoing could survive. It is arguable that the amount of vandalism in such new housing estates should be interpreted as an inarticulate cry of protest against the concrete prisons to which families and communities have been consigned with no hope of release or remission.

Secondly, educational reform led to the hasty and doctrinaire introduction of nationwide comprehensivisation, something which, if it was to be effectively achieved, needed phasing-in over a long period of time. Too many of the changes, transfers and mergers of schools were botched jobs. Along with these changes went far-reaching reforms in the curriculum. From the 1870s to the 1960s education had aimed at instilling essentially middle-class moral values (*hard work, discipline, thrift*) and cultural attitudes (*gentlemanliness, duty, decency*). The emphasis in the 1960s was laid on the search for individual self-expression and the quest for personal fulfilment, free of moral or cultural prescription. It was

City Firm." They are apparently little different from other gangs of hooligans throughout the country. They are not notable for being socially deprived. Only a minority of them are unemployed. Many not only have steady jobs but have wives and mortgages as well. Yet their lives revolve entirely around the creation of violence.

THEY SPEND *the week planning the campaign for the weekend's match. The aim is to ambush the hooligans of the opposing team and engage them in battle. If it cannot be done at the football ground itself, because of police intervention, it will be done somewhere else. They say they only want to fight other "thugs", but they do not appear to mind if harmless people get caught up in the action. It is all cold-blooded and deliberate. Alcohol, they say, has nothing to do with it: "We fight with drink or without drink." And they fight because fighting is "human nature."*

"Tribal, ain't it? [said one of them] Any male of any species will fight another male for his territory."

Any young man who didn't want to fight was unnatural, said another. The desire to fight was rooted in hatred, an emotion which these hooligans regard as entirely normal and respectable. "Thatcher'll never stop it", said one. "She can't take it out of people."

The most remarkable characteristics of these hooligans are complacency and self-righteousness. Like the first "hooligans", they rejoice in the name. With their simple belief in the normality and inevitability of violence, they do not even object when the police forcibly try to stop them indulging in it. They appear to regard the police as just another sort of gang. In fact, they are quite proud of the British police. Being intensely patriotic, they are puzzled when people complain about them beating up foreigners.

SO IF *unemployment is not the cause of their violence, nor bad housing, nor alcohol, nor any of the other social problems we hear so much about, what are we to do with these thugs? According to one of the sociologists on the programme, we must replace their hooliganism "with something that is equally meaningful." They are patriots. They want to fight. And in defending this urge to fight, one of them memorably declared on the programme that "upper-class men join the Army." Are they trying to tell us something?*

I suddenly remember this amiable retired major in Somerset who for years has been generously sending me bundles of documents on behalf of something called the "National Association for Service to the Realm" (NASR). They include a charming poster issued by the National Service League before the First World War, demanding universal military training on the grounds, among others, that "it would teach the youth habits of order and self-restraint."

One of the declared aims of the NASR is for young people "to be taught to give their patriotic instincts some form of practical expression." Major Pomeroy, and your friends in Somerset; perhaps you are wiser than I thought.

But before I offer you my unqualified support, I have one serious question for you. Do we really want to teach these hooligans how to shoot?

Alexander Chancellor
in the SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

Human, After All?

I CAN'T UNDERSTAND *people who say that there is no evidence that TV influences attitudes and behaviour. It hugely influences me.*

Take ***Hooligan*** *(ITV) for example. I came away from viewing this study of football hooligans with quite a changed view of the species. They had their good points, after all, I thought. They are loyal. They are patriotic—they genuinely fight for England.*

They have a sense of fellowship. They are admirably inter-racial. That is, although there may be tensions between Black and White, the youths willingly come together for the greater cause of common hooliganism. (Asian youngsters don't get involved, however.)

The programme studies the hooligans who support West Ham United.

I STUDIED THEM *anthropologically, as though they were a distant Polynesian tribe. "They have strong bonds of loyalty," the commentary told us. "They have clear masculine roles and a dominant hierarchy of males." The football team provides them with surrogate family feelings, too. "I loved me parents", one black youth confessed. "But West Ham became like a family."*

There are strong codes of honour. Valour to comrades comes before victory in combat. "It's no point being good at fighting—it's more important to be loyal to your mates," a veteran hooligan explained.

Hooliganism began to seem not at all mindless, but very methodical and structured. The hooligans have a clear sense of purpose.

"You want to be tops in life, right. There's always rivalry. You're never going to stop it. It's like countries fighting over territory."

What the hooligans say is perfectly rational. Males have been fighting each other since time began and nobody has ever successfully put a stop to it. And if football hooliganism is a substitute for war, perhaps it is a good substitute?

Producer-director Ian Stuttard, assisted by the Sociology Department of Leicester University, indeed made me see the hooligan in quite a new light. Television is indeed persuasive.

Mary Kenny
in the DAILY MAIL

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entirely right that greater imagination, freedom and flexibility should have been introduced into teaching, that new subjects should be inaugurated and educational horizons broadened. But the new approach sought to advance free expression at the expense of basic skills. Not only were Greek and Latin increasingly abandoned, but so too were English grammar, spelling and comprehension. The importance of these now despised subjects, however, went far beyond their functional value. For they inculcated habits of mind, techniques of structured thought, the mental scaffolding within which reasoned argument can be built. The semi-literacy which resulted from the curricular changes (and which can be seen at times even in university students) had a profound effect on the thinking and attitudes of those generations denied formal skills. For literacy and articulacy are the first stages on the road to true self-expression. Violence is often one of the by-products of the frustration engendered by their absence.

Another product of the 1960s educational change has been the de-formalisation of language, with its inevitable effect on articulacy. In the past, working-class children were often trilingual, speaking one language at school ("the King's English"), another at home (often dialect), and a third among their friends (usually heavily marked by obscenity and profanity). The range, breadth, and richness of language which this represented has been reduced to a single narrowly-focused, ultimately monotonous speech-form by the cultural validation through films, books and television of "bad language." "Bad language" tends to be minimalist, restricting thought as well as expression, as observed classically in the mindless football chants like, "*You're gonna get your fucking head kicked in*", refrains unknown before the 1960s and entrenched now in popular speech. Let it not be thought that I am advocating the abolition of slang and profanity. They are an integral part of the richness of the language. But when they are all there is, that richness is devitalised and devalued.

Manners are of course no longer taught. They are deemed an outdated manifestation of "bourgeois respectability." But at their heart, good manners are simply an institutionalisation of concern for the feelings of others, consideration, respect. In my youth (in the 1950s) it was an unvarying habit to stand still and raise your hat when a hearse passed by. No one now notices a funeral cortège. The practice of carrying round large cassette players, colloquially known as "*ghetto-blasters*", and deafening innocent travellers with music they neither like nor desire is an all too common habit with today's young. But it is not something confined only to the young or the working class.

What about concert pests? Those people who persist in wearing digital watches which invariably start bleeping in the quiet passages of music or those self-advertisers anxious to be the first to "*bravo*" at the end, so anxious that they sometimes interrupt the last notes of the music. All of this conduct can be described as an absence of good manners and stems ultimately from selfishness and thoughtlessness.

THE DECLINE IN MANNERS is to some extent a manifestation of the decline in self-discipline and that has weakened in the wake of the relaxing of discipline itself. Violence by pupils is regularly reported even in primary-school classes but teachers are unwilling or unable to impose discipline. Discipline has become a taboo word. But its imposition is only the first step to the inculcation of self-discipline. Children will always do as much or as little as they can get away with, and lines have to be drawn. But the whole notion of discipline is discredited. People are uneasy about it, afraid of being tagged "authoritarian" or, worse, "Fascist", that most worthless and devalued of all hate-words. So, with the rising tide of indiscipline and illiteracy, it is perhaps small wonder that education, once prized by the working class as the key to earthly success, is held in such low esteem.

From Boy Scout to Dirty Harry

THE educational changes of the 1960s were only one facet of a much broader and more pervasive cultural change. It is always to popular culture that we must turn for the spirit of the age.

The "Swinging Sixties" were the crest of a wave whose beginning had been the anti-Establishment rage of the "Angry Young Men" (*Look Back in Anger, Room at the Top*, CND, the British "New Wave" cinema), and the rise of a youth culture centred on rock'n'roll. In Britain it became for the first time in history fashionable to be working class, so much so that some of the upper and middle-class young adopted *ersatz* regional working-class accents, to disguise their now unfashionable antecedents. The "Establishment" in particular, and middle-class attitudes and values in general, retreated before the upsurge of a glittering, energetic, youthful culture, whose emblems were the Beatles and Carnaby Street, David Hockney and David Bailey, Mary Quant and Twiggy, Sunday colour supplements and pirate radio. On both sides of the Atlantic, there was a revolution in music, fashion, and sexual mores, in which the keynote was style rather than content, individual self-expression rather than class or national values, above all the paramountcy of youth. Most significantly it was the era of the "*Me generation*" and "*I Want It Now*."

The sensation of the moment and its instant gratification lay by the centre of the ethic pumped out by pop music, fashion, and films. Many of the culture heroes and role models of the 1960s on the pop music scene, for instance, led lives that were "short, hot and merry" before succumbing to their life-style (Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Brian Jones, et al.). There was a great upsurge in the use of drugs, a key to instant sensation and mind expansion, something which has continued to its present epidemic proportion. There was a great increase too in sexual permissiveness, as the 1960s witnessed a full-scale, almost precipitate retreat from the rigorous social controls imposed during the Victorian era by the forces of evangelical religion.

In 1965 capital punishment was abolished and in 1968 theatrical censorship ended. Abortion and homosexuality were legalised in 1967. Divorce was made easier by the 1969 Divorce Reform Act, and the pill became widely available. Many of these developments were long overdue and greatly to be welcomed in their recognition of individual rights,

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dignity, and freedom. But the exercise of total social and sexual freedom requires above all a sense of responsibility and a sense of proportion. Such freedom can only be exercised creatively and constructively in conjunction with a set of personal and social values which centre on respect for and concern for others, for those likely to be affected by the individual's pursuit of his own desire for gratification, whether it be by sex, drugs, or violence. Almost any set of ideals would do—Christianity ("Love thy neighbour as thyself"); Humanism with its respect for the individual; the sort of English Socialism which owed more to Wesley than to Marx (and which Orwell and Priestley advocated); Liberalism with its essential belief that a man can do what he likes so long as this does not affect the right of the next man to do what he wishes; "One-Nation Toryism" with its paternalistic concern for the less fortunate in society and its desire to bridge class gulfs. "Victorian values" are currently much derided but it was such epitomes of the Victorian values of service, duty, concern, and hard work as William Beveridge, Clement Attlee, and Sidney and Beatrice Webb who spearheaded the progress of social reform in Britain. But none of these value systems is currently in the ascendant; all are held only by certain minority groups.

CULTURALLY, the significant development has been the eclipse of "the gentlemanly ethic", or (as it was sometimes called) chivalry. The 19th century saw a massive revival of interest in matters medieval and chivalric as part of the Romantic movement.[3] In the wake of the novels and poems of Sir Walter Scott with their stylised and idealised portrait of medieval chivalry, and with the return to favour of Arthurian legend, a living and meaningful code of life for a 19th-century gentleman was fashioned. The image of the Gentleman was reformulated as a latter-day version of the medieval knight, the embodiment of the virtues of bravery, loyalty and courtesy, modesty, purity and honour, and endowed with a sense of duty and responsibility towards others. By the middle of the 19th century, the language and imagery of chivalry had been so far absorbed into the fabric of Victorian life and thought that it was automatic to see the Gentleman exclusively in terms of the medieval paladin.

This process was not accidental. Chivalry was deliberately promoted by key figures of the age in order to provide a ruling élite for the nation and the expanding Empire which would be inspired by noble and selfless virtues. The public schools were a vital instrument in the propagation of the new chivalry and it was they who became (in E. C. Mack's words) "mints for the coining of Empire builders." Baden-Powell drew on chivalry for the Code of the Boy Scouts. The British Empire came to be justified in terms of duty and obligation, an ideal which removed it from the squalid business of economics and power politics, and put it on a higher plane.

The same proliferation of chivalric ideas took place in the United States. As John Fraser has written in his masterly study of the phenomenon:

> "the family of chivalric heroes has been by far the largest and most popular one in 20th-century American culture, and its members, in whole or in part, have entered into virtually everyone's consciousness."[4]

Popular films and popular fiction in both Britain and America set up role models, gentlemen heroes who believed in a comprehensive set of values and virtues, "patriotism, religion, the family, the sanctity of marriage . . . breeding, honour and discipline." These standards percolated down to the working class, for it was the working class which formed the bulk of the regular moviegoers. It was also the working class who devoured the stories of public-school life in weekly periodicals like *The Gem* and *The Magnet*. Robert Roberts, writing of the importance of Frank Richards' *Magnet* stories in his own childhood in the slums of Edwardian Salford, noted that

> "The Famous Five stood for us as young knights *sans peur et sans reproche*. . . . With nothing in our own school that called for love or allegiance, Greyfriars became for some of us our true Alma Mater, to whom we felt bound by a dreamlike loyalty. . . . Over the years, these simple tales conditioned the thought of a whole generation of boys. The public-school ethos, distorted into myth and sold among us weekly in penny numbers for good or ill, set ideals and standards. . . . In the final estimate, it may well be found that Frank Richards during the first quarter of the twentieth century had more influence on the mind and outlook of young working-class England than any other single person, not excluding Baden-Powell."[5]

Of course *The Magnet* continued to appear until 1940, and after the War Frank Richards' stories returned in books and on television up to his death in 1961.

ONE OF THE INTEGRAL ELEMENTS of the Gentleman was sportsmanship, all those ideals which have been reduced after years of repetition to cliché—"playing the game", being a "good loser", respecting your opponent, playing by the rules, and so forth. These ideals, first propounded in the public schools, spread to the elementary and secondary-modern schools, which consciously imitated them, and were promoted too in church and chapel sports teams. The ethic of "good sportsmanship" was ubiquitous and held to be the standard of all competitive sports. But (as Tony Mason has shown) it was never adopted by the whole of the working class. There was football violence, sometimes on a large scale, before the First World War, and many of the working-class spectators adopted a different ethic from that which the middle class would have hoped for. They were often committed to "winning at all costs" rather than "playing the game"—partisanship as opposed to pure sportsmanship and playing *against* rather than within the rules.[6] But this was

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[3] Mark Girouard, *Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (Yale University Press, 1981); Philip Mason, *The English Gentleman: The Rise and Fall of an Ideal* (André Deutsch, 1982).

[4] John Fraser, *America and the Patterns of Chivalry* (1982), p. 16.

[5] Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum* (Penguin, 1973), pp. 160-61.

[6] Tony Mason, *Association Football and British Society 1863-1915* (1980).

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before the full cultural impact of chivalry and sportsmanship had taken effect, and although there has not yet been systematic research on this aspect of inter-War football, the evidence suggests that sportsmanship was much stronger among working-class spectators than it had been before the First World War.

SPORTSMANSHIP along with chivalry fell out of favour in the 1960s. Satirists ridiculed them. They were deemed old-fashioned and class-based attitudes. The twin processes of disillusionment with the *status quo* and liberation from restraint are reflected in the characteristic products of 1960s cinema: the violence and cynicism of the spaghetti Westerns; the working-class anti-heroes of the social realist dramas, like Albert Finney in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* ("All I want is a good time—all the rest is propaganda"); the anti-War youth protest films exalting the drug culture and individual self-expression. The ubiquitous spy films embodied the twin facets of the '60s stance—the le Carré style (bleak, bitter, anti-Establishment tone, with suave, heartless upper-class spymasters manipulating ordinary fall guys) . . . and the Bond style (conspicuous consumption, colour-supplement chic, comic-strip sex and violence). Symptomatic of the abandonment of chivalry and sportsmanship was the sudden upsurge of film titles including the word *dirty* in an admiring sense: *The Dirty Dozen, Dirty Harry, Play Dirty, Dirty Dingus Magee* and *Dirty Little Billy*. Nothing is more emblematic of the reversal of cultural values than the elevation to hero status of Harry Flashman, liar, bully, coward (and arch-villain of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*), in a series of popular adventure stories by George MacDonald Fraser.

THE WHOLE THRUST OF popular culture in the 1960s constituted a massive rejection of the old value-systems. Gentlemen heroes like Ronald Colman, Errol Flynn, and Gary Cooper were displaced by roughnecks like Charles Bronson, Burt Reynolds, and Clint Eastwood. The swift upper-cut to the jaw by which the old-style hero disposed of an opponent who stood for a recognised alternative social ideal was replaced by a lovingly observed pulping and smashing by the hero of someone not dissimilar to himself in pursuit of personal revenge.[7] The celebration and validation of thuggery—violence for its own sake, narcissistic and solipsistic toughness as the essence of masculinity—coincided exactly with the long-suppressed and discredited ethic of the undermass, which rose to the surface of society to assume cultural dominance. The video revolution of the 1980s has consolidated its hold as the young soak themselves in instant violence by borrowing and running and rerunning the popular manifestations of the ethic. They bear titles like *Smash Your Face In II* or *Knee in the Groin III*.

The same reversal of dominant values has taken place in sport. It is no coincidence that the 1960s saw the rise of obscene chanting, football violence, and the worship of success at any cost. The young, instead of supporting their local team through good times and bad, victories and defeats, transferred their allegiance to those clubs, however far away, who could guarantee permanent victory, clubs like Liverpool and Manchester United. The demise of the Accrington Stanley Club in 1959 was a portent of things to come. Similarly today's sporting idols tend to be the so-called "bad boys of sport", the yobocracy, epitomised by John McEnroe, and not the "white knights of sport" like Tom Finney and Stanley Matthews. The true face of football was to be seen in the tragic Bradford City fire in which 52 soccer fans perished: an Edwardian stand, local patriotism, three generations of families attending peacefully together, pride in sporting achievement. It is a bitter irony that it should have been followed so soon by a manifestation in Brussels of the other face of football. It somehow symbolises the replacement of the old ethic by the new. Before the 1960s, the chivalric code percolated down from the middle class to the working class, through the powerful agencies of school, sport, and popular culture. Since the 1960s, the ethic of the undermass has filtered upwards, again via popular culture, to influence the middle- and upper-class young.

The Front Line

DO THE POLICIES and attitudes of the present government offer any hope of reversing the trend? Thatcherism is not the cause but the political consequence of the triumph in the 1960s of the "*Me generation*." Its programme is widely taken to be based on the promotion of social inequality, the endorsement of "*I'm all right, Jack*" materialism, the exalting of profit over communal need and service, and the devaluation of education. Nothing is more instructive than the nature of the new breed of football hooligan epitomised by Leslie Muranyi and his "Cambridge Army" who were jailed recently for attacks on Chelsea fans.[8] They are not the counterparts of the old undermass, poor, down-at-heel, unemployed. They are often well-dressed, comfortably off, and in employment. They are scions of the old upper-working class, the Victorians' "respectables." But their total divorce from the attitude of their forbears is epitomised by their adoption of the ethic of the undermass. For they now openly glory in violence and in the masculinity of the "tough guy", getting their instant gratification and social status from the infliction of pain and injury.

The solution to the current problem is easy enough to prescribe but perhaps impossible to implement. The young need to be inculcated with a sense of personal and social responsibility, of concern for others, of self-discipline and restraint, of courtesy and conscience. But to begin to undertake it requires a massive shift in political, social, and cultural values: the abandonment of political programmes

[7] George Orwell, prescient in this matter as in so many, saw it coming during the War. See his classic essay "Raffles and Miss Blandish", *Collected Essays*, vol. 3 (Penguin, 1982), pp. 246-60.

[8] Toby Young, "Saturday Afternoon Fever", *The Observer* (2 June 1985).

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of materialism, selfishness, and unrestrained individualism for policies of social concern and community care; the redefinition of masculinity in terms of compassion, courtesy and common humanity rather than brute force.

It requires, above all, an educational revolution. The "Victorian value" we have heard least about in recent years is the love of learning, the passion for knowledge, the desire for skills, the compulsion to embrace the universe, which was so notable a characteristic of the 19th century.[9] Can education in its broadest sense be returned to the forefront of social and political thinking? Instead of reducing the school leaving age to 14 (as Lord Young has advocated) shouldn't the government raise it to 20? For, as has been apparent for some time, there is never going to be "full employment" again. Even if the economic recession ends, technological changes will see to it that several millions remain permanently out of work. The Protestant work ethic is rapidly becoming redundant, but its strength can be seen in the way in which people define themselves in terms of their work. Those without work become in a very real sense "non-people." What we need is a new ethic, a learning ethic, through which people define themselves by what they know, their skills, their knowledge of all kinds. I should think that a massive programme of education for leisure is required to combat the drift to boredom, drink, drugs and violence, the four horsemen of the modern apocalypse.

Geoffrey Pearson's valuable book *Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears*—constructed as a polemic against the law and order lobby which argues that youth violence is a recent phenomenon and can be dealt with by short, sharp shocks—convincingly demonstrates that "street violence and disorder are a solidly entrenched feature of the social landscape." But he largely omits the cultural perspective from his argument. He points out that cheap literature, popular music, and cinema-going were regularly castigated in the inter-War years by both Right and Left alike for "corrupting" and "demoralising "the working class. This argument needs to be taken further.

Those critics of popular culture were profoundly wrong. Arguing as they were from a highbrow and Puritan perspective that deplored entertainment and sought moral and intellectual uplift, they completely underrated the role of popular culture in maintaining the *status quo* and containing the violent undermass they so feared. George Orwell was closer to the truth when he wrote in 1937:

> "It is quite likely that fish and chips, art-silk stockings, tinned salmon, cut-price chocolate, the movies, the radio, strong tea and the football pools have between them averted revolution."[10]

If this sounds fanciful, examine the contents of that list more closely—cheap food, cheaply produced luxuries, gambling, and the popular mass media. It was the movies and the radio, tightly controlled and programmed to middle-class values and the gentlemanly ethic, which ensured the cultural dominance of those values. What the 1960s witnessed was the end of this dominance and the rise of the ethic of the undermass to a role of unchallenged cultural pre-eminence in precisely those areas of popular culture (cheap literature, popular music, and the movies) to which it had previously been denied access.

Popular culture is now, as it was then, the front line. It is where the battle for the souls of the young will be won or lost.

[9] David Newsome, *Godliness and Good Learning* (1961).

[10] George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (Penguin, 1962), p. 80.

Battle of Britain

August and the South Downs dolphin to the sea;
the villages of Kent and Sussex lie

down low in wooded valleys; life goes on
and every father stands behind his son.

The enemy is at the shore, his shadow on the chalk,
and boys are called from school for heroes' work.

A high insect drone commands the sky—
out of the sun, through history, they fly

bang into some mad courage that is myth.
They bank on blades of air, the island tilts—

they find its balance and the cliffs lie down.
Although the war has only just begun

the ancient properties and ways are safe:
what boys have won, old men will confiscate.

Cal Clothier

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Elias Canetti

The Human Province

Lines from a Notebook

THIS VOLUME CONTAINS my jottings from 1942 to 1972. Thirty years of a conscious life are a long time. My aim was to make my own choice and presentation of this entire period. Whatever these years may have been like (and I have never concealed their terror, which I perceived as my own), I have to be grateful for experiencing them with an *alert* mind. If such a summing-up appears rather erratic, it is close to each moment in every sentence and it does contain the truth of *one* man.

I would like to describe the background of these jottings with the same words that prefaced one of my earlier volumes. Since their contents, from the years 1942 to 1960, have largely been included here, I may be permitted a briefer repetition of these words.

I realised that *Crowds and Power* might absorb me for several more decades. And the concentration on a single work, as well as a sort of prohibition that I placed on any other and especially a purely literary work, exerted a pressure that eventually took on dangerous dimensions. A safety valve was indispensable, and I found it, at the start of 1942, in my jottings. Their freedom and spontaneity, the conviction that they existed only for their own sake and served no purpose, my irresponsibility in never reading them again or changing them in any way, saved me from a fatal paralysis.

Gradually, they became an indispensable daily exercise. I felt that a special part of my life went into them. They ultimately grew into many volumes, and this presentation is merely a meagre selection.

ELIAS CANETTI, *who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1981, now lives in Zurich, though for many years his home was in London. His novel "Auto da Fé" (n.e. Picador, 1978) and his philosophical work "Crowds and Power" (n.e. Penguin, 1981) were followed in Britain by "Kafka's Other Trial" (John Calder, 1985), "Voices of Marrakesh" (of which extracts appeared in the June 1978 issue of* ENCOUNTER*) and a play, "The Numbered" (Marion Boyars, 1978, 1984). Now André Deutsch are to publish (24 October) "The Human Province", in a translation by Joachim Neugroschel, followed next spring by "The Conscience of Words", and, later, by "Ear Witness" and "The Plays.*

Canetti, as Iris Murdoch has said, is "one of our solitary men of genius."

In late 1948, after lengthy preliminary work, I began to write *Crowds and Power*. This stretched over many years. There were qualms and doubts, and when the delays became perilous, I permitted myself, very rarely, to do some literary writing. It was only in 1959 that I could get myself to finish the manuscript that I regarded as my life's work. It is not surprising that a great deal of that opus flowered into the jottings that I regularly committed to paper during those years.

The reader should not be denied the adventure of encountering a few little known but enormously consequential source works. In such cases it would be wrong to think of "reading" in the normal sense of the word. Such vehement excitement, keeping a man in suspense for weeks and months and not releasing him afterwards, has an effect like that of explorations among unknown tribes. The power is sometimes that of, I cannot put it any more tamely or calmly, Revelations. Likewise, a few examples of encounters with "enemies", namely thinkers whom one respects even though they offer a topsy-turvy picture of the world, strike me as sufficiently noteworthy to figure here. I have always particularly sought those who kept my sense of protest on the alert.

In one issue, which is the most important to me—the question of death—I have found only adversaries among all thinkers. That may explain why my own opinions appear here with the strength of a faith, never being declared without zeal and vehemence.

However, they had long since lost their safety-valve character. They no longer emerged under the pressure of a task that had weighed heavily upon me. Whereas in the past I had often felt that I would have to suffocate without the jottings, they now had their own inviolable right. The idea that I might publish some of them later on did not interfere with their freedom, for the selection was uncertain and could include only a very tiny portion.

Many men have tried to grasp their lives in the full spiritual and intellectual context, and those who have succeeded will never grow old. I wish that some men would also record the leaps in their lives. It seems that the leaps belong to *all* people; anyone can easily take whatever pertains to oneself. The loss of a superficial unity, inevitable in such an enterprise, cannot be regretted, for the true unity of a life is secret, and it is most effective when it unintentionally conceals itself.

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1942

How inconceivably modest are human beings who bind themselves to only one religion! I have very many religions, and the one overriding them is only forming throughout my life.

In the best times of my life I always think I am making room, even more room in me. Here I shovel away snow, there I raise aloft a piece of fallen sky; there are superfluous lakes, I let them run out (I save the fish), overgrown forests, I drive crowds of apes into them, everything is astir, but there's never enough room, I never ask why, I never feel why, I just have to keep making room, on and on, and as long as I can do so, I merit my life.

History preserves something different from any earlier forms of transmitting the past. It is hard to determine what. More than anything, history strikes one as a fixated vendetta of the masses, of *all* masses, and that is exactly what condemns history. It provides for the perpetuation of all religions, nations, classes. For even the most peaceful among them have at some point drawn blood from someone, and history faithfully screams it to high heaven. Much has been attempted against it, but we never escape. History is the giant serpent that imprisons the world. An age-old vampire, it sucks blood from the brain of every young person. It is not to be borne the way it commands exactly the same thing in many different languages. The most disgraceful forms of belief, which everyone ought to be ashamed of, are kept alive by history as it proves their age. No one has ever felt obligated to it except for a few thin priests, and they would have had an easier time without history. One can object that history has brought the earth very close to unification, but at what price, and *is* the world already at one with itself? It seems to me as if history used to be better or at least more innocuous in the days when it got lost from time to time. Today it is shackled to itself with the chains of writing. If offers to the future centuries the falsest, basest, and most untruthful documents. No one can sign a contract today without people knowing it a thousand years hence. No one can come into the world unnoticed; he is at least included in some statistic. No one can think, no one can breathe, history corrupts his pure breath and twists the words around in his brain. How powerful the Heracles who could strangle it! Even death will be overcome more easily than history, and the first and only exploiter of a triumph over death will once again be history.

The various languages you ought to have: one for your mother, which you will subsequently never speak again; one which you only read but never dare to write; one in which you pray but without understanding a single word; one in which you do arithmetic and to which all money matters belong; one in which you write (but no letters); one in which you travel, and in this one you can also write your letters.

It is advisable to tempt the gods, the more often, the better; and do not give them a moment's peace. They sleep too much and leave man alone on the raft of his dying brothers.

He stole my left ear. I took his right eye. He concealed fourteen of my teeth. I sewed up his lips. He stewed my behind. I turned his heart inside-out. He ate my liver. I drank his blood. *War.*

He keeps his money in his heart, the beats count it.

He will return to the full and wonderful world if no one dies any more and people carry out their wars by means of ants, who are very human.

He has the wit of his wickedness, the forgetfulness of his age, the narrow-mindedness of his ancestry, and the brutality of his profession: a great general.

I hate the eternal willingness for truth, truth out of habit, truth out of duty. Truth is supposedly a storm, and when it has cleared the air, it passes on. Truth should strike like lightning, otherwise it will have no effect. Whoever knows truth should be afraid of it. Truth should never become the dog of mankind; woe to him who whistles for it. We should not take it on a leash, we should not take it in our mouths. We should not feed it, not measure it; one should let it grow in its dreadful peace. Even God got too familiar with truth, and *that's* what he choked on.

I have never heard of a person attacking power without wanting it, and the religious moralists are the worst in this respect.

1943

The ancient travel accounts will some day be as precious as the greatest works of art; for the earth was holy when *unknown*, and it will never be that again.

"Culture" is concocted from the vanities of its promoters. It is a dangerous love-potion, distracting us from death. The purest expression of culture is an Egyptian tomb, where everything lies about futilely, utensils, adornments, food, pictures, sculpture, prayers, and yet the dead man is not alive.

There are books that one has for twenty years without

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reading them, that one always keeps at hand, that one takes along from city to city, from country to country, carefully packed, even when there is very little room, and perhaps one leafs through them when removing them from a trunk; yet one carefully refrains from reading even a complete sentence. Then, after twenty years, there comes a moment when suddenly, as though under a very high compulsion, one cannot help taking in such a book from beginning to end, at one sitting: It is like a revelation. Now one knows why one made such a fuss about it. It had to be with one for a long time; it had to travel; it had to occupy space; it had to be a burden; and now it has reached the goal of its voyage, now it reveals itself, now it illuminates the twenty bygone years it mutely lived with one. It could not say so much if it had not been there mutely the whole time, and what idiot would dare to assert that the same things had always been in it.

THE ENGLISHMAN tries to reach a *single* judgment, as demanded by the circumstances, and he refuses to string together abstract judgments. Thinking, for him, is an immediate exercise of power. Thinking for its own sake strikes him as suspicious and repulsive; the thinking man is always an alien to him, especially in his own language. He likes to seek out a small area where his own knowledge is superior, and here he really doesn't have to yield to anyone. A man aiming at many such areas is not an Englishman's cup of tea; he senses the land-hungry conqueror in him, and he is not mistaken. Enigmatic to him are people who have no goal for their knowledge. Such people, if they don't care to be ridiculous here, would do better to conceal their light.

The essence of English life is distribution of authority and ineluctable repetition. Precisely because authority is so important, it has to disguise its omnipresence and retreat to modest sentences. Others detect the slightest encroachment, for the sake of their own authority, and they reject it coolly and resolutely, though politely. Borders, as an expression of what is permitted, are more certain here than in any other country, and what is an island but a more clearly bordered country? Then again, repetition gives life here its endless security; the years have been ramified into the tiniest details of existence, and, not only in time, everything will again be as it has been a thousand times already.

ONE LOVES a country as soon as one gets to know many ridiculous people in it.

THE GREAT WRITERS of aphorisms read as if they had all known each other very well.

OF ALL WORDS in all languages I know, the greatest concentration is in the English word *I*.

I CANNOT LOOK at any more maps. The names of cities reek of burnt flesh.

THERE ARE NO powerful words left. People sometimes say "God" merely to speak a word that used to be powerful.

THE PHILOSOPHER is characterised by the tiny number of his chief ideas, and the stubborn and irksome way he reiterates them.

A SHATTERING THOUGHT: there may be nothing to know, and error comes only because we try to know it.

HOW MUCH one has to say in order to be heard when silent.

ONE WOULD LIKE to write just so much that the words give life to another, and just so little that one can still take them seriously oneself.

WHEN SPEAKING, he composes his words too calmly, he always has control of his words, they never chase him, they never jeer at him, they never make a fool of him—how can I trust this man?

EVERYTHING one *records* contains a grain of hope, no matter how deeply it may come from despair.

1944

THE GREATEST intellectual temptation in my life, the only one I have to fight very hard against is: to be a total Jew. The Old Testament, wherever I open to, overwhelms me. I found something suitable to me at almost every point. I would like to be named Noah or Abraham, but my own name also fills me with pride. I try to tell myself, when I am about to sink into the story of Joseph or David, that they enchant me as a writer, and what writer have they not enchanted! But that's not true, there's more to it. For why did I find my dream of the future longevity of men in the Bible, as a list of the oldest patriarchs, as the past? Why does the psalmist hate death as only I do? I scorned my friends for tearing loose from the enticements of many nations and blindly becoming Jews again, simply Jews. How hard it is for me now not to emulate them. The new dead, those dead long before their time, plead with one, and who has the heart to say no to them? But aren't the new dead everywhere, on all sides, in every nation? Should I harden myself against the Russians because there are Jews, against the Chinese because they are far away, against the Germans because they are possessed by the devil? Can't I still belong to all of them, as before, and nevertheless be a Jew?

IF YOU KNEW more about the future, the past would be even more difficult.

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AN EGYPTIAN meets a Chinese and trades a mummy for an ancestor.

1945

COME SPRING, the grief of the Germans will be an inexhaustible well, and little will distinguish them from the Jews.

Hitler has turned the Germans into Jews in just a few years, and "German" has become as painful a word as "Jewish."

THE HARDEST THING: to keep discovering what you know anyway.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE GERMANS affects us more deeply than we like to admit. It is the extent of the deception they lived in, the hugeness of their illusion, the blind power of their hopeless faith that keep haunting us. We always loathed the people who tacked together that disgusting faith, the few truly responsible ones, whose minds were just barely sufficient for that; but all the others, who did nothing but believe with as much concentrated energy in a few years as the Jews mustered in thousands of years, who had life and appetite enough to really want their earthly paradise, the control of the world, to kill anyone else for it, to die for it, everything in the shortest time, these countless, flourishing, radiantly healthy, simple-minded, marching, decorated guinea-pigs for a faith, drilled for a faith, trained like no Mohammedan—just what are they now when their faith collapses? What is left of them? What else was prepared in them? What second life could they now begin? What else are they without their dreadful military faith? How greatly do they feel their impotence since nothing existed for them but power? Where else can they fall? What will catch them?

PERHAPS because we dare not even catch our breath between this war and the next, the next will never come.

ONE INVENTION still lacking: how to reverse explosions.

WE ARE coming from too much. We are moving towards too little.

THE ARROGANCE OF A CONCEPT as the basest arrogance, for it has a huge hoard of coins to buy more, but it is too tightfisted to change them.

THE THING that puts our minds at ease about history is its falseness. It is a story about history, for what if we knew the truth!

I'M ONLY FORTY; but hardly a day passes without my learning of the death of some person I knew. With the years, there will be more of them every day. Death will creep into every last hour. How can one help being at his mercy?

GUILT FEELINGS towards my father: I'm now nine years older than he became.

WHY AREN'T more people good *out of spite*?

ALL KNOWLEDGE has something puritanical about it; it gives words a morality.

I WOULD LIKE to become tolerant without overlooking anything, persecute no one even when all people persecute me; become better without noticing it; become sadder, but enjoy living; become more serene, be happy in others; belong to no one, grow in everyone; love the best, comfort the worst; not even hate myself any more.

1946

IN REALITY, *every* faith is close to me. I feel at peace in any faith so long as I know I can go forth again. But doubting is not my goal. I am enigmatically prepared to believe, and it's easy for me, as though it were my task to represent everything that was ever believed. I cannot impugn faith itself. It is strong and natural in me and moves in all kinds of ways. I could imagine spending my life in some secret haven containing the sources, myths, disputations, and stories of all known forms of belief. There I would read, think, and gradually absorb all faith.

ONE SURVIVES SO MUCH that one mistakenly thinks one can survive anything.

THE MOST tormenting notion: *all* dramas have been played out, and only the masks keep changing.

I WANT TO KNOW MORE about men than anyone, even writers, has known up till now. I therefore have to get deep into my own few people, as though I had to *make* them very accurately myself, as though they weren't alive without me, my word being their breath, my love their hearts, my mind their thoughts.

TO SEE all the conceptual hair-splittings and systems of philosophers come true, that nothing is forced together gratuitously, nothing is thought gratuitously—the world as a torture-chamber of thinkers.

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To live as if our time were unlimited. Appointments with people for a hundred years hence.

1947

Each man is meant to be the keeper of several lives, and woe unto him if he fails to find the lives he has to keep. Woe unto him if he does a bad job of keeping those he finds.

To feel death constantly without sharing one of the comforting religions. What a gamble, what a dreadful gamble!

To become better? Even if you succeeded, you would not be better in a different situation, hence you would not have become better, merely cunning.

Most of all I dislike ideas if they turn out to be correct too soon. What's the use of saying something if it turns out to be right within two years?

I hate people who build fast systems, and I will see to it that mine never fully closes.

How much I would like to listen to myself as a stranger, without recognising myself, and only find out later that it was I.

When you've made a lot of words, you lose your sense of how much they mean to others. Thus begins the actual wickedness of the word-man.

Sometimes a man leaves his best on the street, like an old newspaper, and someone else comes along, notices it's a newspaper in a language he doesn't know, and he stomps on it angrily in order to make it dirtier.

There is a point at which one dare not experience anything else if all earlier things are to have a peaceful and unequivocal meaning. For those earlier things are changed by further events and influences; they aren't totally lost, but they change so greatly that their uniqueness is lost. Metamorphoses make use of what already exists; nothing is really changed back. The ability to recognise the stations at which only looking back and expressing are allowed may be considered the acme of the poetic art of life. In reality, one misses most of one's works because one is after more things. This hunger for an immensity in oneself, for a store of the living world, which store would remain in existence even if the world didn't—this hunger is wonderful and quite worthy of a human being, and yet, once aroused, it cannot be sated, and the man who is driven by it has no choice but to outwit it from time to time and lull it to sleep.

He imagines he has to change each sentence he ever spoke or wrote. It's not enough to change the sentences within reach; he has to find all the lost ones too; track them down, grab them, bring them back. He cannot relax until he has every last one. An infernal punishment for all who had a wrong faith.

1948

There are very many people everywhere, whom I see: they do not feel it. Very many everywhere who feel me seeing them: I do not see them.

To live in a city until it becomes alien to you.

Porcelain as the grace and elegance and distribution of the fear of catastrophes. If a man has a great deal of porcelain around, little can happen to him. And how lovely are his myriad little fears! How he can watch over them, lovingly tend them!

And what if only the worst survived? A Darwinism in reverse.

1949

Mohammed is something like the fulfilment of all prophets: he is a legislator and a *de facto* regent, it was he who first brought the prophets truly to power; no one before him ever utilised God so consistently and successfully. Faith, for him, is obedience. He is lavish with God's possessions, the rewards he promises for the next world; he would like to be as generous as a king. He calls himself God's prophet; he could just as easily or better be named God's *command*.

He accepts only those of his forerunners who achieved great success: Abraham, Moses, Jesus. He never knew his father, his respect for other people's property is that of a well-behaved orphan; it gets him a rich widow for a wife, who worships him in every way.

In the Temple of the Caaba, he intercepts the pilgrims; a tourist-prophet instead of a tourist-guide, and he is more and more tempted to instal himself there; to replace the oligarchy of the Koreishites with a tyranny. His negotiations with the people of Medina have something political from the very

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beginning, he secures his position with alliances and systematically prepares a war against his home town.

MOHAMMED'S interest in *tombs*, he catches his mortal disease in tombs. Corpses interest him as objects of resurrection. For him, the Last Judgment is the utmost concentration of dominance. *All* are judged, and the decision is forever. It is the greatest crowd imaginable, the object of a definitive judgment. The heap of the dead, a true goal of war, is so great as to include all corpses. (Mohammed certainly prefers wars to healing the sick.) After the Last Judgment, when there is no more dying, all the dead become living, and the only purpose of their awakening is for them to come together under the immediate and direct command of God.

In Islam, God's command is a great deal like a death sentence. In the Bible, the "slaughter this and slaughter that!" mostly refers to sacrificial animals; God's command strikes people only occasionally as an immediate bolt of lightning. The step from Judaism to Islam is one of a powerful emphasis on and concentration of command.

EVERYTHING gets more meaningful from year to year: the ageing man will drown in meanings.

HE BURNED all his books and withdrew as a hermit into a public library.

THE ANCIENT KELTS had a vivid expression for the relationship between warriors and dead men—as a mass, a heap. When they went off to war, each man would take a stone and throw it, together with the others, on a heap. When returning home from the war, each man would take back one of the stones: the stones of the fallen, who could not do the same, remained lying there. Thus a stone monument to the dead was created of its own accord. This precise subtraction of the returning men from those who had gone out expresses a peculiarly distinct feeling for the heap of the dead: instead of the corpses on the battlefield—the monument of stones.

"IF PEOPLE would at least keep their relatives a secret", said the stranger, "so that you couldn't tell who belongs to whom. It would be wonderful having a secret family, really all for oneself, and no one could know about it, you can only reach it with great caution because no one must find out about it, a father, mother, brother, sisters, like secret mistresses!"

WORDS we cannot live without, such as love, justice, and goodness. We let ourselves be taken in by them and we see through them, in order to believe in them all the more vehemently.

LET EACH MAN keep his deepest sorrow a secret.

FOR WEEKS NOW, I have been perusing a book that deeply disturbs me: *Memoirs of a Nervous Illness*, a book by Schreber, ex-president of the Dresden senate. It appeared almost fifty years ago, in 1903, paid for by the author, bought up by his family, removed from circulation and destroyed, so that only a very few copies have passed down to us. One copy came into my hands in 1939 under peculiar circumstances and has remained with me ever since. Without having read it, I felt that it would become important to me. Like other books, it waited for its moment, and now that I'm ready to gather my thoughts on paranoia, I have taken it up and read it three times in a row. I do not believe that any other paranoiac, interned as such for years in an institution, has ever so completely and convincingly presented his system.

What things I have found here! Support for some of the ideas that have been haunting me for years: for instance, the insoluble link between paranoia and power. His entire system is the description of a struggle for power, with God Himself as his real antagonist. Schreber long imagined he was the only surviving human being in the world; all the others were the souls of dead people and God in multiple incarnations. The illusion that a man is or would like to be the only one, the only one among corpses, is decisive for the psychology of both the paranoiac and the extreme practitioner of power. This connection became clear to me for the first time in Vienna during 1932, when I attended the trial of Matuschka, the railroad assassin.

But Schreber also had in him the complete ideology of National Socialism as a delusion. He regards the Germans as the chosen people and sees their existence endangered by Jews, Catholics, and Slavs. He often designates himself the "warrior" to save them from this peril. Such forestalling of what happened later in the world of the "mentally healthy" would be reason enough for everyone to study his memoirs. But he thought up a lot of other things as well. He is haunted by the thought of the end of the world, he has grand visions of it, unforgettable visions. It would be idle to list everything occurring here; I discuss it thoroughly in *Crowds and Power*. But some aspects, interesting to me in connection with *Auto da Fé*, will be mentioned here. For instance, the depiction of the period of *motionlessness*; it recalls the corresponding chapter, "Petrifaction", in *Auto da Fé*. Likewise, the conversations with imaginary figures could also come from *Auto da Fé*.

This study of paranoia has its dangers. After just a few hours, I am seized with a tormenting feeling of being locked in, and the more convincing the system of madness, the stronger my fear.

Two things are involved here. One: the completion and isolation of the delusion, which makes any escape very difficult—no doors anywhere; everything tightly locked; no use looking for any fluid to submerge in, to float away on; even if you found it, it would be locked out; everything is like granite; everything is dark, and how naturally this hard darkness passes into you. In everything I have ever tried, I have always taken cautions against being locked in like that; apertures, space—that was my uppermost thought, so long as there's a lot of space, nothing is lost. But here, someone

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thought, as his delusion, something that was the easiest thing in the world for me, something I could bring about so effortlessly, so nonchalantly. Never am I more afraid of myself than in the completeness and isolation of another person's delusion that I understand.

The second and far more dangerous thing is: that I begin doubting the validity of my own thoughts. If it is possible to so convincingly depict and isolate this manifest delusion that it overwhelms one—then what could we not depict, assuming we have something of this "paranoid" power? The convincing evidence that I often feel for myself is just as available for the other person. The difference, however, is that I instantly deviate without locking up what strikes me as convincing, I shift it, put it away, begin with something entirely different, approach the same problem later from different sides; never pledge myself to any *one* method and certainly not a method of my own; leap from the confinement of established disciplines to others, like a chess knight; remove private rigidity by mastering new things; and above all, despite well-meaning friends, I draw my labour out over more and more years, so that the course of the world has every opportunity of refuting or destroying these discoveries and me.

Nevertheless, it is still true that I cannot live without the faith in these discoveries. I cannot equate them with any varieties of madness. Thus I hate myself for the danger to which I expose new ideas when I penetrate other people's confining delusions.

A LOVE LETTER from Sweden. Strindberg on the stamps.

HE MADE a desert in her mind. That's where his ideas blossom.

1950

I WOULD GIVE a great deal to get rid of my habit of seeing the world historically. How wretched is this division by years and its transfer to the life of animals and plants, when they were not yet burdened by us. The crown of human tyranny is the counting of years; the most oppressive of all legends is the story of the creation of the world for us.

A PHILOSOPHER getting through life without a single answer. But oh how he asks!

HISTORY portrays everything as if it could never have come otherwise. Yet it could have happened in a hundred different ways. History is on the side of what has happened, detaching it in a stronger context from what has not happened. Among all possibilities, it banks on the one, the surviving one. Thus history always seems as if it existed for the *stronger*, for what has actually happened; it could not have *not* happened, it *had* to happen.

RANKE RECOGNISES POWER, and the fulfilment of power is history for him. Historians who do not worship power cannot write a coherent history of states. Rome sufficed for many of them long after it ceased existing. Of the four great periods in history, such as Voltaire saw it, Louis XIV's was the last: the adversary of a history of kings and battles was no less influenced by power than any normal chronicler of wars.

Ranke's peculiarity as an historian in his pluralism; he is a polytheist of power. Since, during the centuries before him, as in his own, there were a number of great powers, he has to announce them all. For those who were no longer great, Spain and Turkey, he seems to have felt something like embarrassment.

1951

THE THING that repels me most about philosophers is the *emptying* process of their thinking. The more often and more skilfully they use their basic words, the less remains of the world around them. They are like barbarians in a high, spacious mansion of wonderful works. They stand there in their shirt-sleeves and throw everything out the window, methodically and steadfastly, chairs, pictures, plates, animals, children, until there's nothing left but whole empty rooms. Sometimes the doors and windows come flying past. The naked house remains. They imagine that these devastations make it *better*.

EACH WAR contains all earlier wars.

ROME AND PARIS AND LONDON will be forgotten. One ocean will cover them. No one will understand English. A few horses will read a mass for Epsom Downs. The graveyards of Verdun will light up the bottom of the sea.

IF I KNOW PEOPLE WELL, I like hearing them tell the same stories over and over again, especially when they concern the central events of their lives. I can stand being only with those people whose stories are somehow different each time. The rest are actors who have learned their parts well, I don't believe anything they say.

VERY BEAUTIFUL EYES are unbearable, one has to keep looking at them, one drowns in them, one loses oneself, one is totally disoriented.

YOU CARRY the most important things in you for forty or fifty years before you venture to articulate them. For this very reason, you cannot reckon what is lost with those people who die early. All people die early.

THE VERY IDEA of a transmigration seems more meaningful

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than that of the afterlife. The advocates of a faith in the hereafter do not realise that they are concerned with something they don't even mention by name: a *togetherness* in the hereafter, a crowd that never disintegrates. Once gathered there, they do not want to be forced apart.

How about a paradise in which the blissful never saw one another, in which each one lived for himself in a kind of hermit bliss, remote from the others, so that no voice could reach them; a paradise of everlasting solitude, without physical needs or complaints; a prison without walls, bars, or guards, from which there was no place to escape because there was no place to go. Each soul would give speeches to himself, as his own preacher, mentor, comforter, and no one else would be listening. A blissful existence, with many people preferring the torments of hell.

THERE ARE some English expressions that I hate from the bottom of my soul, for instance when you call a person a "failure", because nothing impressive has become of him. Just look at the people to whom this word is applied! P., who is full of such English peculiarities, once said to me about Benjamin Constant: "He was a failure." Well, who wasn't? Didn't everyone live in vain? And didn't everyone die.

THE STUPIDEST WOMEN: those who come and report everything right away; to the nearest ear; it hasn't even fully happened yet.

THE MAN WITH WHOM flattery will get you everywhere—you only have to tell him often enough how good he is. He is ready to commit murder in order to be considered good.

I AM STILL ATTRACTED by everything in *Hobbes*: his intellectual courage, the courage of a man filled with fear; his high-handed learning, which senses with a peerless instinct what it has to confront *in itself*, and what it has to leave aside as empty and drained; his restraint, which allows him to hold mature and powerful thoughts back for decades, determining their moment by himself, uninfluenced and ruthless; the joy in that closed ring of enemies around him—his being his own party, letting some people think he can be used, but knowing how to defend himself against abuse, and without ever going after low power, doing only what creates an audience for his ideas; his constancy through so much liveliness and freshness of his mind; his distrust of concepts (what else is his "materialism"?) and also his great age. I sometimes wonder whether my liking him is overly affected by those ninety-one years he reached. For I almost never agree with the results of his thinking: his mathematical superstition says nothing to me, and it is his conception of power that I want to destroy.

But I *trust* him; the processes of his life and thought strike me as unadulterated. He is the adversary whom I hear; he never bores me, and I admire the terseness and power of his language. The notional superstition of later philosophers is a thousand times more unpleasant to me than his mathematical superstition. I trust him and I trust his years. It's true that I wish I could have as many years as he did, for how else can I achieve the same constancy, the same testing, affirming, confirming of *my* fundamental experiences—which are today the same for all, one only has to give them time to permeate one totally.

A NIGHTBOOK, a "nocturnal", no line of which was ever written by day. Parallel to it a real daybook, a journal always written by day. To keep the two apart for a few years, never comparing them, never confusing them.

Their ultimate confrontation.

1952

HISTORY, consisting mainly of diabolical cruelty—why do I read it if I have nothing in common with any of its cruelties—torture and killing, killing and torture, and I keep rereading it in myriad ways; always the same. Without the dates that stick in it like pins, you could never tell all these things apart.

OH, SENTENCES, SENTENCES, when will you join together and never come apart again?

WHAT RELIGIONS DO seems useful to some people. It is true that they mellow the dreadful edge of parting and give hope to those who are less affected, the ones remaining alive. However, religion's chief sin is against the dead, over whom they decree as if they had the right to do so and possessed some knowledge about their destiny. I approve of any fiction that makes the living behave better to *one another*. But statements about the completely vanished dead strike me as unscrupulous and frivolous. By accepting anything claimed about them, one abandons them totally, and they cannot defend themselves in any way. The defencelessness of the dead is the most incomprehensible fact. I love my dead too much to locate them anywhere (I already find it degrading to lock them away and bury them). I know nothing about them, absolutely nothing, and I am resolved to continue loving them in the full torment of this uncertainty.

1953

PERHAPS ALL THOUGHTS until today have revolved around one that still waits to be thought. Perhaps everything depends on this thought's really being thought. Perhaps there is no certainty that it will be thought.

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I CANNOT READ ABOUT any primitive nation any more. I myself am an entire primitive nation.

HE READS in order to remain rational, intelligible to himself. Otherwise—what might have become of him by now! The books he holds, regards, opens, reads, are his leaden weights. He clutches them with the strength of an unfortunate about to be swept away by a tornado. Without the books he would live more strongly, but where would he be? He wouldn't know his place, he wouldn't orient himself. Books are his compass, memory, calendar, geography.

NOTHING IS MORE BORING than to be worshipped. How can God stand it?

1954

A WORLD in which no person *recognises* anyone else. The main activity of these people would be to convince each other *that they are who they are.*

ONLY the non-believer has a right to miracles.

WHAT IS IT ONE LOVES so much in closed cities, in the cities wholly contained within walls, not running out into streets gradually and unevenly?

Above all, it's the density; you can't get out everywhere, you always find walls and are forced back into the city. This keeps recurring in a city with many dead ends, like Marrakesh; you come deeper and deeper into the city and suddenly you're standing before a front door and you can't get through. The house is closed to you; no path leads inside, no path leads past, you have to double back. The tenants of these end-houses—even though there are scarcely any windows—are so familiar to one another that they would have to notice a stranger. There is no inducement for passers-by.

Strangers are more strange here, and tenants more at home.

HE IMAGINES GOD as a polyglot, politely answering every worshipper in his own language.

IN ENGLAND, no man is praised to his face, that's why people keep dogs. Praise is permitted for anything one undertakes with them.

RELIGIONS infect one another. No sooner do you enter one than the other comes alive in you.

1955

EACH WEEK, new figures were put up, and everyone could pray to them. Everyone came and was relieved. They made sure that at the end of each week, the figures were removed and new ones brought in. These new ones had different names. No name was ever venerated for more than a week, and the same name never came to be venerated twice.

"WHEN CAMELS are sold to a stranger they get sick, out of disgust at the price."

HE GETS DRUNK on other people's faults, a drunkard of morality.

IT TAKES MANY WORDS to become enthusiastic; they have to reach the surface quickly and in a certain tumult. No sooner has a word risen, no sooner is it erect, than it is seized by the next word and flung back down. Words are like wrestlers, and it is always the later one who wins the match, its closeness to the origin gives it the greater power.

But it is a special kind of word that kindles enthusiasm, the kind that contains space and future, a vastness in every direction. Things that were locked up in a man, twisted and futile, suddenly stretch out at an enormous speed every which way; in his words, he touches a criss-cross of the beginning and end and centre of the world.

TO FIND the old power that grabs its object and contemplates it for the first time. Who will give it to me? The great enemies, Hobbes, de Maistre, Nietzsche?

DE MAISTRE sees through the rules of the game in human society. The horror of the slaughter-house on which everything is based is as present with him as with me, but he accepts it, he acknowledges it, and once he has made up his mind to accept it, he becomes its eulogist.

I respect de Maistre, but I find it upsetting that he intends the very opposite with the same thoughts and experiences as mine.

GERARD DE NERVAL would strike me as a poet, if for no other reason than because he thought he was descended from *Nerva*.

All arithmetical connections, proportions, elliptical destinies and paths are of no interest to me, all connections by names seem exciting and true.

My god is the Name, the breath of my life is the Word. Places do not matter for me when their names fade out. I have never been to any place whose name did not attract me there.

I fear the analysis and explanation of names, I fear them more than murder.

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IT IS STRANGE that one comes closer to truth only in the words that one no longer fully believes. Truth is a reanimation of dying words.

1956

THE OBJECT of archaeology is a whole new kind of future. It is retrograde; every new step it takes into the past, every older grave it finds, becomes a piece of *our* future. The ever-older becomes what lies ahead of us. An unexpected discovery could change our own, still uncertain destiny.

TO SPEND the rest of one's life only in completely new places. To give up books. To burn everything one has begun. To go to countries whose languages one can never master. To guard against every explained word. To keep silent, silent and breathing, to breathe the incomprehensible.

I do not hate what I have learned; I hate living in it.

SINCE I CANNOT BE without words, I have to maintain my trust in words, and I can do that only if I do not disguise them. Thus, every external demand based on words is impossible for me. I can write them down and keep them somewhere. I cannot throw them at anyone's head, and I cannot do commerce with them. It goes against my grain to change anything in them once they are written down. All talk about art, expecially by people who make art, is unbearable to me. I am embarrassed for them as for quacks, only the latter are more interesting. Books are holy for me, but that has nothing to do with literature, and certainly not my own writing. Thousands of books are more important to me than the few I have written myself. Actually, *every book* is the most important for me, in some physical way that I cannot quite explain. The blameless beauty of conscious prose is something I despise. It is true that some of the most important things have been formulated in good prose, but that happened virtually despite the writer; those things were really important, and so the prose was good; they were so firmly and deeply rooted that their measure could not be taken too early. The beautiful prose that moves in the sphere of what is acquired by reading is something like a fashion show of language; it keeps gravitating around itself, I cannot even despise it.

I CANNOT DETACH MYSELF from *Islam.* My forebears lived in Turkey for centuries, and before that, perhaps for the same length of time, in Moorish Spain. Over and over again, I have approached Islam; over and over again, I have gone away from it. There is something in the fanaticism of this faith that fitted in with my earlier nature. My liberation and expansion as a human being is like a liberation from my own Islam. The God of Islam is more concentrated than the God of the Jews. He has exerted his utmost effect as a model for the rulers of Islamic countries. The things that torment me and that I hate, the things that I struggle against and strive to destroy—I keep finding them most distinct in the rulers of Islam.

There is the double generosity in *killing* and *giving presents*; the subjugation to the ritual law; the acknowledgement of the more powerful, of God, by the ruler; being steeled by God for any cruelty whatsoever; the anticipating of the overall judgment through countless single judgments beforehand. There is also the equality of human beings before the faith, which practically adds up to an equality of being killed. There is God as a murderer, who decides every single death and has it carried out; and there is the ruler, who emulates God in the naivest way. There is the command, that always flaunts its archaic character as a death sentence; the religious recognition of any power that can assert itself (God gives power to whomever he wishes, now this one, now that one) and its religious challenge, which, however, only serves the attainment of power.

There is an enormous nakedness of power in Islam, while everything else is multiply veiled and disguised by the law.

It is a control of people only, which therefore also achieves its utmost brilliance in large, cosmopolitan cities. The time of subjugating animals is long past, it is no longer an issue; animals are now only sacrificial victims.

BASICALLY, THE ONLY DAYS I now find valuable are the ones I have spent with any of the holy books. Just as other people once had to pray daily, so too I have to brood over some kind of ancient holiness, as though I had to find in it the evil things we could some day do to one another.

But I do not wish to warn. Nor do I wish to foresee. I hate the prophets. I only wish to *hold* what we are. I do not believe that it can be found in arguments and assertions. But I want to know all the *assertions*. All I am interested in is the assertions. I know they can be refuted. But I want to have all the assertions inside myself, next to one another, as though they were alive and unchallenged. I know they are not, and should never be again for anyone. But it is my goal, my task, to have them alive in me and to think about them.

1957

IF I HAD TO SAY what I found most sinister in history, it would be the *models*: Caesar's Persian plans before his death, which came from Alexander. Hitler's Russian campaign in order to outdo Napoleon. There is something insane in this recurrence of great plans, and it can never be wiped out. Thus everything will recur when it is most absurd. Who will imitate Hitler, who will emulate our other leaders? Whose children's children will die for this or that epigone?

TO SPEAK as though it were the last sentence allowed you.

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THERE IS an indestructible solemnity in him, as though he had already prayed to himself in the womb.

CAN AN ENEMY teach you freedom?

THERE IS NOTHING concrete and different that does not strike me as meaningful; as though everything in existence were concealed in oneself, and one could make it visible to oneself only through things that are different.

SOMETIMES ONE SAYS one's best and most important things to *just anybody*. One need not be ashamed, for one does not always speak to ears. The words want to be said in order to exist.

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Mountains

Oh the terrific male thrill of conquest!
The utter wonderfulness of surmounting
obstacles, driving hard bargains
with porters, establishing base camps,
winning upwards, always Excelsior
(I may be some time
over this bit of celebration),
breathing increasingly heady,
decreasingly lungworthy air,
surveying that of which
the intrepid mountaineer
may justly be called monarch;
to plant, finally,
the symbol beloved of airlines,
fairgrounds and protonazis:
the Union (No Surrender!)
Jack (I'm all right)
—on the uttermost pinnacle
of the highest available mountain
because it is there!

Meanwhile, "deep in the province
of Fukien, where few Europeans
have ever penetrated" from whence
comes Jackson's Ching Wo tea,
"which is best drunk with a slice of lemon"
(I quote from the 8 oz.
226 gm. tin)

there are two old Chinese persons
sitting on a verandah
under a bamboo leaf roof
sipping perhaps Ching Wo
anyway tea
and turning from time to time
to look at the lilac
indigo
purple
far-off
mountains
(because they are there)

Oliver Bernard

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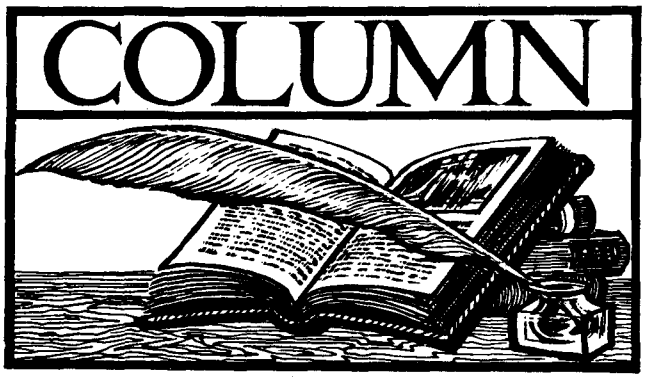

NOT LONG AGO, passing a country pub, I was amazed to hear a shout of "Time, gentlemen, please!" It sounded as improbably archaic as Old London Street Cries. Was life once more imitating television? When did *you* last hear someone call out "All aboard!" or "Any more for the *Skylark*"? I know that in year after year of attending auction sales, I've never met an auctioneer who announced "Going . . . going . . . gone!"

That's only one of the auction-goer's mild disappointments. Another is the rarity of bargains. More disconcerting, in view of the folklore, is the unlikelihood of buying some item by mistake.

The first time I went to an auction sale, I kept as still as a statue. If I coughed, or sneezed, or scratched my ear—even if I caught the salesman's eye—then, I felt sure, some costly lot would be sold me—that vast mahogany chiffonier, those salmon-pink curtains, that sinister, stained roll of steak-house carpeting. Frozen with dread, I tried to look nonchalant, staring out of the dusty window. Then, when the battered desk I fancied came up for sale—could I attract the auctioneer's attention? Could I hell. It took more than a sharp gesture, more than a raised hand like a schoolboy knowing the answer. I actually had to call out—advertising how keen I was, and probably inciting dealers to bid up the price.

That, as you'll have guessed, was at a small local sale. It was held each Friday morning on the outskirts of the university town. Down an unmade lane between a craft workshop and some garages, a gipsy assortment of goods would be assembled: old mangles, defunct refrigerators, rusty lawn-mowers, zinc baths. To the left, inside a huge shed, was an Aladdin's cave. Every conceivable household object, from taps to tapestries, from stuffed weasels to art-deco statuettes; church pews and deck-chairs; fire-dogs and china cats; prehistoric typewriters and pre-electric washing machines. There was no printed catalogue: lots were numbered on luggage-labels. There were no seats: the punters just stood around.

At eleven o'clock precisely, the auctioneer marched in. He was a stubby, freckled joker in his mid-thirties, with slight malapropisms in his automatic patter. "Lot twenty-four: the nearly new interior-sprung child's mattress, in first-class condition. Now what am I said for this, ladies and gennelmen?" Some listeners swore it was "What may I say for this . . . ?"—but I write as I heard. The bidding was often desultory. Nondescript but useful wares were knocked down for a tenth of their shop value. Even my desk was absurdly cheap. And sometimes the local farmhouse yielded surprising treasures—a pair of marine watercolours, an oil by Alexander Nasmyth. The watercolours were going for almost nothing, to one in a group of suspiciously quiet dealers. I bid, and the price shot up—to a point where I dropped out. The Nasmyth I did buy, not knowing its real value; an expert friend, years later, found the painter's name on the back.

Coups like that were very rare. When they happened, surprise and pleasure were tempered by the unhappy feeling that the vendor, somewhere, had been done down. As the Reno lawyer remarked, however: "Sure we resent the racket, but resentment is dulled by greed."

In that H. E. Bates, A. E. Coppard world of small equivocal enterprise there was anyway little place for misgivings. I was furnishing a flat on the cheap. The vendors were probably pleased; the auctioneer was doing brisk business. When I went back a decade afterwards, the whole area had become respectable. The lane was metalled, the shed repainted; the auctioneer looked sleek in a shiny car.

I THOUGHT OF HIM and his rugs-to-riches progress when I read of the scandals in New York which had tarnished the reputation of some of London's greatest sale-rooms. Until then, their world had seemed galaxies away from my humble country auction. Sitting in some London sales had resembled going to church: it was simply a little more comfortable. All around sat the prosperous patrons, women in hats, men in discreet fur collars. In front was a rosewood pulpit, ceremoniously mounted by the auctioneer. Even his voice had an elocutionist's ecclesiastical ring. Thousands—when the bidding reached such heights—were always "thaousands", pronounced thus, and with Jeeves-like imperturbable nonchalance, as if to say "This is small beer to us: those who worry about the price can't afford to be here."

Cowed by such loftiness, I once again played possum. Now and then, if an item looked like selling for what I could afford, I sneaked in a bid just before the hammer fell. Was it, I wondered, the best tactic? If I bid early, would a show of determination discourage the opposition? But it seemed foolish to bid up something one wanted to buy: so I stuck to my ratlike tactics. I came away, over the years, with some plausible-looking near-junk.

Always, in these august sale-rooms, I felt out of my depth. The depth was that of other people's pockets; but the bewilderment was all my own. Especially in picture auctions. Here, the first thing was to know the code used in the catalogues—an Alice-in-Wonderland affair. If a painting was described as by Caravaggio, that was precisely what it wasn't. Nohow! Contrariwise! To be a Caravaggio, it had to be attributed to "Michael Angelo Amerighi (or Morigi) Caravaggio"—named in full, as in a police court. "M.A.A. (or M.) Caravaggio" was no good either: that simply meant his studio. And in any case the sale-room only "considered" it to be genuine, even with a signature. "Signed" was fairly confident. "Bears signature" implied the worst. I hope you're impressed when I add that I now own an "Ingres" and a "Géricault." Burglars, I'm glad to say, aren't. They know the code.

But that was only half the battle. Never much guided by

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catalogues, I prefer to nose things out. Attending a picture viewing is rather like going to an art gallery where the labels have been removed: it's enjoyable just to identify those paintings which appeal—not instantly and completely, but with that touch of difficulty, of something withheld, which means that their effect may grow. Then, compare your selection with the bidding. It's often a complete surprise. Feeble 19th-century rustic scenes, soppy Neapolitan children, dull horses and, above all, naval battles—these will almost always fetch the highest price. There seem to be endless supplies of them. Are impoverished art students churning them out, on specially dirtied canvases, to decorate yuppy "town houses" and "period homes"? Or do the same pictures keep circulating, exchanged like real estate by social climbers "trading up"? There's more fun, in my view, to be got by painting one's own Old Masters—or at the least restoring and improving ancient junkshop daubs.

Sacrilege of this sort has its uses—if only as a vaccine, like Tom Keating's forgery, against the lunatic prices some art-objects now command. "I wouldn't pay that much to a *dealer*", one shocked expert remarked at a recent sale. Revelations from New York, where bids seem to have been plucked from the air, and "reserve" prices fanciful, suggest that there's a South Sea Bubble element around. In that archetypal financial folly, investors bought paper because they were sure they could sell at a profit, irrespective of what it was "really" worth. Can it be that some investors are doing the same with paint?

Some objects, of course, are so unique as to be virtually priceless. That very word, in their case, takes on new depth: there's nothing comparable to set a standard or act as a guide. But such things seldom appear in the sale-room; when they do, it's an historic event. What really seems extravagant is the level of prices paid for fashionable painters or periods—often in crazy contrast with what the unfortunate artists got. Are the purchasers really enjoying so many thousands' worth of aesthetic pleasure—or marital harmony? Does sheer pride of possession warrant such a price tag? Or are they merely investors, stocking their pigment-and-canvas bank?

Few of us, I guess, are rich enough to know. Even as citizens paying through taxes for museum purchases, we'd find it hard to quantify our personal quota of the public satisfaction at some masterpiece on display. And so we're forced back to a crude, objective answer. Auctions, in numinous metropolitan sale-rooms or in someone's garage, are neither more nor less than laboratory examples of the market—the liberal economy in an observation tank. Supply and demand alone make the price. Ours not to reason why: ours but to sell or buy. And if there are ripples on the surface of a more-or-less transparent price system, write them down to excitement, vanity, impulse buying, competitive malice. Those too are attributes of Economic Man.

Yet I still can't help seeing auction sales as something more than a market. The bulk of the market economy deals in recently manufactured goods. They, it's true, have some degree of commercial glamour: French beans from Kenya, clementines from Nicaragua, anti-freeze from fraudulent wine merchants. The thought of such produce winging round the globe, when it doesn't induce despair at the waste of energy, can still recall schoolroom emotions at the Romance of Trade. But, for the most part, trade seems prosaic. Auctions are quite another matter.

It's partly the drama of being there, staking one's cash, taking quick decisions, respecting one's limit, keeping cool, fighting the suspense. Pulse rates surely accelerate as the bidding mounts: there's unscripted, improvised drama. A good auctioneer exploits it with the rhythm of a rousing preacher. In the Middle West, I've heard an auctioneer who sounded just like a preacher with the gift of tongues: what came out of his mouth was a babble of gibberish studded with occasional figures. It might have been avant-garde music. It certainly played on the emotions, not the brain.

Among the emotions, of course, are avarice and meanness. We all hope to undercut the dealers; so, within limits, do they. At carpet sales, in particular, they seem to form a caucus, grinning and ribbing each other like greasy overgrown schoolboys, tossing wisecracks at the auctioneer, disdaining some perfectly good rug then competing for another, turning the event into a Chico Marx routine. But just try to outbid them! Then they show their muscle. Under the surface, there's powerful dislike of the amateur.

Nor is that all that makes auction sales so gripping. Titanic battles, last-minute bids, mistakes: these happen far less often than in legend. What does haunt the sale-rooms is a profound sense of mortality and ebbing time.

Even the catalogues exude it. "Property of a Person of Title", they sometimes proclaim; or, more frequently, "Property of a Gentleman." One's tempted to add an adjective. An impoverished gentleman? A bankrupt gentleman? A disgraced gentleman? A *dead* gentleman? That may be the most likely—in which case, what's property to him?

And then, look at the objects themselves. That toilet mirror: what crumbled beauties has it reflected? That naval chest: where is the hero now? Those frail Bateman dessert-spoons: how many skulls have they entered, tapping how many teeth? And when we become the "owners" of heirlooms, how long will our tenancy last? The sale-rooms will outlive us; so will "our" precious things.

That's the reason why I can't feel great indignation at the dispersal of "our heritage." Oh, yes: it's sad when great houses and their collections are sold off. The whole was sometimes more than the sum of its parkland. To see, as I recently did, more-than-lifesize stone lions under the hammer makes me regret past grandeur more than I deplore its pride. But which mattered more—the trappings or the people? The artefact or the skill? The object or the spirit? We know which can be bought and sold. What we truly value is evanescent—and beyond price.

M

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John Mole

From Doctor Watson's Casebook

The Case of What He Ordered

No, not this afternoon, Holmes, not the violin.
A good read's more the ticket, don't you think?
Not the *Police Gazette* . . . A book you could get lost in,
Foreign climes etc. What? No, not that Chink
With the fingernails—too close to home.
You really must relax. No, absolutely not,
You've read it twice already. Which? *The Moonstone*?
Gracious, old boy, be sensible. Less plot, less plot.

The Case of The Amazing Coincidence

Absolutely, Holmes, oh yes, bang
On, old man, you must be right—
What else, indeed, but an orang-outang
Would have left its prints tonight
At just this spot beneath the Major's window?
Yes, I did hear that strangled cry.
Holmes, you've done it, by jingo!
Oh my! Oh my! Oh my! Oh my! Oh my!

The Case of The Ten Green Bottles

Look, Mrs H, between you and me
And the old five-barred proverbial, as it were,
I'm sure they don't fall accidentally.
They're being pushed. Haven't you noticed since he
put them there
How strangely he's behaved? No, I haven't exactly seen
Him do it, but he's not like himself at all—
Ten bottles, Watson, he told me, *and they must be green*.
A normal chap hangs pictures on the wall.

The Case of The Remorseless Conjunction

There are times, believe me Lestrade,
When I'm jolly glad of my revolver,
Times when I tell him *Bring in Scotland Yard*
But he won't (of course), when we're knee-deep in heather
On Dartmoor (and gorse) and he hasn't a clue
And he's *loving* it and there's probably quicksand
And a bally hound with luminous fur and I mention you
In passing and he gives me that look and. . . .

The Case of The Missing Proverb

Dash it, Holmes, sometimes you go too far.
This is the wrong tree that you're barking up.
Of course you're a genius, I know you are,
But why can't you ever stop?
Two in the bush, old man? What's that?
Half the time, you know, I just can't understand
A word you say. You're talking through your hat!
One in the . . . One *what*? *Whose* hand?

The Case of The Déjà Vu

Well, Holmes, another handsome lady
Called while you were out—black veil,
Something about a letter, obviously
End of her tether don't you know. Blackmail.
The usual jitters. So I sat her down
Until she'd calmed a bit, then she upped and went
Leaving her card (they all do) with an out-of-town
Address. Shall I call a cab? No, this time it's Kent.

The Case of The Apologetic Parenthesis

Yes, yes, dear reader, I make
Allowances. Life would be very dull
Without him. No, I can't have my cake
And eat it, but it's pretty awful
When you always get the crumbs *before*
They've fallen from the great man's table
If you see what I mean . . . (I'm a bad hand at metaphor)
And I'm far too agreeable.

The Case of The Fulfilled Wish

Reader, one posthumous account
And then that's that, I promise you.
I've had my bellyful. I can't
Take any more. Here's what I'm going to do:
A leaf from Moriarty's book—
I'll lure him to some dangerous high place
Then . . . *Look behind you, Holmes old fellow. Look*!
And that will be the very last last case.

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Four tz'u of Liu Yung

Chü Yü Kuan

Among the peaks, clouds fly
Along the riverbank, the sun lingers
Upstairs, by the rail, day in day out, mist and wave all she sees
One look toward the deserted passes where the river flows:
A thousand miles of clear autumn
Afflict the eye

There, far far from the capital
And from the fresh, soft, lovely girl
Who, since they parted waits for letters that don't come
The geese, treacherous messengers,
Fly slowly past along the shoal
Trailing long thoughts

Secretly, from the beginning, she dreamed only
Of trysts, illicit pleasures—how many would there be?
What did she know of meeting, parting? Waiting is a misery
Past happiness turns to rain, past love to sorrowful clouds
To follow is made impossible
When he leaves—climbs the mountains, goes down to the river—
It starts again, the day to day of love—
Long hours without speaking
And nothing for it but to come down from the tower

Ch'i Shih

Late autumn sky
A sudden shower sprinkles the yard,
A few scraggly chrysanthemums linger by the door
The Wu-tung by the well, dishevelled,
Entices the remaining mist—
What misery!
Looking at the water and the mountain passes,
Clouds flying across a lazily setting sun,
I feel Sung Yü's despair
When, reaching the river, he saw the ranges to be crossed
Along the endless road that is
The wanderer's bane.
I'm sick of the Lung River's clang and bang
The cicadas cry among the rotten leaves
The crickets crick in decaying grasses
Noise answering noise

In lonely inns, a day goes like a year
Wind and dew gradually change
Quietly, late at night
The long sky clears
Limpid and shallow the River of Stars,
Washed in bright moonlight
Thoughts, memories, regrets

Through the long night, looking at all this
How can I bear furtively to recall times past?
With neither fame nor office
Lingering along the lovely path to the red tower
I squandered the years

The capital was beautiful
And I was young
Banquets at night, love in the morning
Wild friends, bizarre companions—
Singing and drinking—
Each tried to be the last to leave.
In the flash of a shuttle, it was over
And now past revels seem a dream
What limit to the mist and water along the road?
Brooding over old promise, wealth, and name, unmans me—
To think back is misery, for nothing
Time moves on
I feel the chill
Slowly the painted horn sighs a few last notes
I turn to the window
Turn off the lamp and face another dawn
Embracing my own shadow—again no sleep

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Ts'ai Lien Ling

Soft moonlight dissolves
Into a frosty dawn—
Cruel moment for the west-bound traveller—
Lovely, the girl who takes his hand
To see him to the crossing; the red doors sigh and open
A thousand such fine faces, fair and gentle, wait for him—
Without a word, she sheds her tears
Sick at heart, he tries not to look back

A skiff of orchid wood
Is poised with convenient urgency to take the tides
He's eager to be off
How would he know the threads of parting
By the thousands, in her disordered heart?
Or the taste of bitterness in a silence she cannot share?
Still, he turns—once the city walls are out of sight—
Beyond the cold river and sky
Half hidden, stand two three misty trees

Chu Ma Tzu

I climb the isolated ramparts alone
From a watch-tower the view is vast—
Quietly descending toward the misted shore
The shadow of a rainbow
Hangs rain
A harsh wind
Caresses the window ledge
Takes back what's left of summer warmth
Bit by bit—startled by a leaf, I feel autumn,
Listen to the last lingering cicadas—it's late
Time for the season of white shang
The look of it brings back past pleasures
There, at the capital, beyond fog and mist, secluded places. . . .

Off that way lie memories, melancholy
New sorrows gather easily
Old loves do not
All day, high up, I lean and look out
As the wind rises, my spirits droop, no one to talk to,
A clear view, thin mist
Here and there scattered crows
A lonely silence settles on river and wall at dusk
An ornate cornice of the south tower
Sees off the dallying rays of sun

Translated by Julie Landau

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NOTES & TOPICS

London Commentary

Ghosts & their Chains

By Edward Pearce

HISTORICALLY, British trade-unionism has enjoyed power the way no other Labour movement, except perhaps the Lands Organisation in Sweden, has done. The late Patrick Hutber in his acerbic City column in the *Sunday Telegraph* used to refer to Harold Wilson during his record period in office as "the Deputy Prime Minister." Real power, said Hutber, belonged with Jack Jones, the high-minded, hard-tempered head of the Transport and General Workers Union. And Jones, a man of narrow, bitter principle and the geniality of iron ore, did indeed possess something close to a veto on law-making; he was also able to request and require legislation which should have shamed a government willing to pass it. The high-water mark of union power was the promotion of a Bill in the mid-1970s which prescribed membership of the T & G for all workers concerned with loading duties within five miles of any water depot. The Labour Government was willing to coerce workers outside the ambit of the strongest trade union to become involuntary members at a time when Dock regulation had destroyed all the ports it covered.

Law should not exist for such purposes; the law ought not to be the property of any interest group within either capital or labour. Fortunately for everyone, especially the cold-storage workers and other beneficiaries of the employment flowing from "unofficial" ports, the Bill never became an Act. Labour's meagre majority could afford no slippage and after a brilliant rearguard action by the cold-storage industry and its PR man, Peter Morris, two Labour MPs, Brian Walden and the late Professor J. P. Mackintosh, declined the guidance of the Whip—to the profound relief of great numbers of their colleagues. But it is a measure of the automatic assumption of the Arnold Schwarzenegger status of the T & G that none of the future secessionists who would form the nucleus of the Social Democratic Party voted against the measure.

That is not a reproach. Union power was accepted in this country as an extension of death and taxes. The duumvirate of Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon of the Engineers was deferred to on terms of at least equality with the elected government. They had, less than a decade earlier, crushed utterly Labour's sensible and temperate White Paper for union reform, *In Place of Strife*. When Edward Heath brought out his Industrial Relations Bill in 1971, Labour not only filibustered the Committee stage but unprecedentedly were frog-marched through more than a hundred consecutive unbroken divisions (divisions normally being skipped by common consent when the guillotine operates). For once the term "whipping", innocently derived from hunting parlance, seemed exactly apt. Hugh Scanlon had been told by Harold Wilson in one of those fits of defiance which come upon men programmed for defeat, "Get your tanks off my lawn, Hughie." That had been in respect of Labour's White Paper, and the metaphor was drawn from recent unpleasantnesses in Czechoslovakia. But by the time a slightly softer Tory law was being enacted, the unions had rather nasty crowds on the street chanting syllabically, "*Kill the Bill, Kill the Bill, Kill the Bill.*"

It was indeed killed when Mr Heath, having brewed up inflation precisely because he was afraid of the unions, stumbled into the February 1974 election and Labour, with a tenuous majority, was restored to power. All sorts of wrong conclusions were drawn from that election, the folly of ever again taking on the unions being one of them. It was supposed that if the pitch "Who governs the country?" failed, then the electorate must be dead set against "confrontation." The Tories supposed themselves to have learned the same lesson as Labour had learnt in 1968: the unions were invincible, and the miners were double-plus invincible. The miserable destructive record of British labour relations—which more than monetarism, more than any other imaginable cause, has shrivelled us as an industrial nation—was held to be sacred to the British way of life, and the electorate thought either to be keen on union power or utterly submissive to its implacable samurai-like authority. The Closed Shop—the peremptory right of the union (and remember, a samurai could summarily behead a merchant for looking at him) to dismiss a worker for non-membership through the passive medium of what was quaintly called the boss—was supposed by a whole body of Conservative opinion (led by James Prior) to be a necessary, regrettable state of affairs. The unions should be offered lunch and reasoned with, persuaded that a Conservative government was not its enemy; a phrase which I coined long ago, "the pre-emptive cringe", seemed to have come into its own.

HOW CAN ONE RECONCILE the expectations of ten years ago with the Trades Union Congress whose annual conference at Blackpool I attended in early September? It had all the qualities of a family quarrel superimposed upon a family funeral, with the prospects of family estrangement Sicilian style. A great deal has happened lately to This Great Movement of Ours—secular and precipitate decline for a start. Clearly the dismal unemployment has a great deal to do with the picture. But the situation is subtler than that. Machiavelli's recommendation that it is better to be feared than loved was very well understood, but not his earlier remark that a shrewd Prince would, wherever possible, seek both.

It is part of the unions' tragedy that they were once held in

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affection, not least by the liberal strand of the middle classes. David Low's white horse, hero of hundreds of cartoons, said it all. The TUC was ungainly, blundering, naive, but innocent and good (actually a very fair account of Norman Willis, the delightful and hapless new General Secretary). Another cartoonist, my colleague Nicholas Garland, who is surely Low's successor as the dominant pictorial satirist in Britain, sadly had to reinterpret George Stubbs's famous *Horse frightened by a Lion*. The horse, flinching in distress, was Low's lovable old white cart-horse; the mane of the lion was marked with the simple word MURDER. And indeed earlier this year Russell Shankland and Dean Hancock, two young Welsh miners, had been jailed for the killing of David Wilkie, a taxi-driver who was taking a working miner to the pithead during the strike. Mr Arthur Scargill, that truly frightening man, does not exclude them from his list of "political prisoners" created by the strike and the street action which accompanied it.

THE TRUTH IS that the British unions, though they carry the loyal support of their members on a practical basis, are no longer feared, and have discovered that no underpinning of affection checks them in free fall. Anti-union legislation (or, as the Tories would decorously call it, trade-union reform) has become the single most steadily popular weapon in the hands of this Government, the one thing to which they can turn with further and better particulars in the expectation of recouping their current unpopularity.

I exclude from this judgment the banning of unions at GCHQ Cheltenham, which may be regarded as having the same Constitutional standing as Jack Jones's proposed Five Mile Act. Forbidding union membership is odious for the same reasons as compelling union membership. And it was instructive to notice at Blackpool the passion with which the GCHQ illiberality was attacked by Eric Hammond. Here is irony with a vengeance, for Mr Hammond, Frank Chapple's successor at the EEPTU—manifestly the most formidable mind and, Scargill apart, the most dominating personality in the General Council of the TUC—may not be there next year. We are coming very close to a split inside the union movement which would leave us, on the French and Italian model, with two general organisations. The trifling issue of accepting government cash to finance the ballots is the box of tennis balls which may start a war.

There is, quite apart from statutory requirement, a tendency which will not lightly be reversed to use ballots much more widely. The unions, under pressure and conscious of their old arrogance being a liability, are accommodating themselves in a creaking way to the participation of their membership. But the cost is very burdensome and the AUEW, which under its moderate leadership of Terry Duffy and Gavin Laird actively prefers ballots, had accepted (ironically after balloting its members) the cash on offer from the Government. Funnier or sadder still, whichever way you take it, that cash was put up, not by the union's sardonic persecutor but as a half-hearted gesture by his predecessor, Jim Prior, who had been going through those motions largely to soothe Mrs Thatcher. As Jock Bruce-Gardyne remarked, never has a fig leaf turned so disconcertingly into a red rag.

LARGELY BECAUSE OF the foolish pique of David Basnett, a man who has for years been the most oversold stock on the Union Exchange, this departure from the terms of a resolution at the Wembley emergency conference which smarter, less vain and self-important men would have covered with five coatings of liquid fudge, produced horrible shoot-out and high-noon headlines. It was temporarily shelved, not least because of the urgent insistence of Neil Kinnock, who knows a nightmare when he sees one. But the struggle continues. The AUEW and the EEPTU, whom I would characterise as Liberal-minded rather than Right-wing, work closely together. And while the Engineers have agreed to the TUC health warning on their ballot, the Electricians will couple a ballot of their own to take place at the same time. The Gavin-and-Eric principle, not far from the original notion of workers' solidarity, is "Sack my buddy, sack me."

Since there are other substantial unions (like the building workers' UCAT, which has to choose between very dire financial straits and absorption by the Transport and General Workers on the one hand, and the acceptance of Prior's shilling on the other), this is potentially the single most ruinous quarrel in which the TUC has ever engaged. If, late in the year, the two major unions are expelled, the rules of "Bridlington" will be off. This piece of jargon means that TUC unions will not be restrained by the Bridlington agreement of 1939 from poaching each other's members.

Indeed they will be going to war. But it does not follow that the TUC unions will win. They have greater numbers, but the Engineers and the Electricians, both of whom have reformed themselves on very modern, up-to-date lines without any reference to the Conservative Government, are both efficient (computer-minded, for one thing) and popular, obliged under Bridlington rules to turn away many applicants with trades tied to other unions. They have done their arithmetic, know where they will gain and lose—and are very clear that they will emerge as net winners.

The stupidity of Basnett and the acquisitive self-interest of the T & G (which still has a formidable Communist holding in its equity), have conjured up the vision of a Great Schism and a Trade-Union War. But underneath is a deeper difference. The Engineers and Electricians are nobody's poodles, not in a hundred years are they Mrs Thatcher's; what distinguishes them is the quality of their leadership, their serious belief in working through their members rather than clicking their fingers and invoking the Working Class. The work done over years by Frank Chapple in the old ETU is now bearing fruit.

There was a tendency, because of Mr Chapple's outspokenness and contempt for the sinuous side of politics, to underrate the EEPTU as (forgive the expression) mavericks and isolated Right-wingers. But the system which updates union membership on to computer twice weekly,

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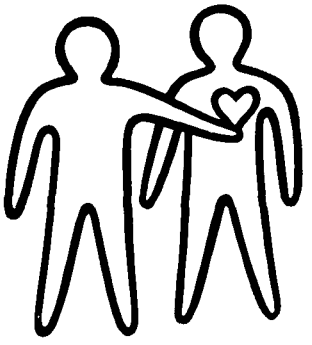
which consults its members because it thinks it *should* consult its members, has created not only efficiency but a very high semblance/reality ratio. The AUEW, once it had replaced the Left-wing Scanlon leadership, has followed a very similar pattern. There are Left-wingers who now privately acknowledge that successful trade-unionism under adverse conditions can only be conducted on just such a base of referral and accounting to members. Finger-clicking is out, and Arthur Scargill's attempt to run his union on the basis of perpetual Czarism will cost him an alternative National Union of Miners, gathered around the rich Nottingham coalfields. It will of course be a natural candidate for any alternative TUC which Basnett may in his inspirational way ultimately create.

There could be political consequences as well. Both Eric Hammond and Gavin Laird are sincere well-wishers of a moderate, level-headed Labour Party. If they leave the TUC, they take their money with them: where they put it in narrow political terms could become the basis for fine calculation and manoeuvre, with Labour trapped like Buridan's ass between two loads of hay (the other haystack being Mr Ron Todd's Left-wing but sclerotic T & G). Much will be up for grabs—and the grabbing will be amusing to watch.

The prospect of Mr Todd with his two million votes effectively *becoming* the TUC will have no appeal for its more modest members. The possibilities, once the wall is breached, are not unnumbered. I would simply confine myself to the view that, over the long period, intelligence and modernity, deferring to the freely expressed wishes of union members, constitute the formula most likely to succeed. Trade-unionism, by one means or another, is going to become more democratic. Those who stand before that advance, moaning and clanking their chains, are ghosts of Trade-Unionism Past. A natural reaction will be to walk clean through them.

The Vanishing Act

Parents & Children & Parents—By Dan Jacobson



We expect or children's childhood to pass as slowly as we remember our own to have done. And so it does—*to them*. To them a week, or a month, or a year, can appear ocean-like in its expanses of sameness and changeableness. To us, however, to the parents we have become, the childhood of our children passes as swiftly as everything else in adult years. From moment to moment, we feel, we are left vainly grasping after people who are no longer there. They have vanished even while we were looking at them. How can we recall the six-week-old infant when he has been shouldered out of his own life and out of our minds by someone of the same name and with something of the same features who is now six months old; and how can we recall the six-month-old infant when another infant aged two years or three years or five years has taken his place? And the fifteen-year-old who replaces that five-year-old will in his turn be swiftly replaced by a grown man with whom our relationship is quite different from the other, provisional relationships we had had before with all his other, provisional selves.

True, we change as adults too; we change more rapidly than we are willing, whether in looking at ourselves or others, to acknowledge. But the speed and extent of those changes cannot be compared with the metamorphoses our children pass through. Where have they gone, those earlier avatars of their selfhood, those forms they assumed for this moment or that? Into photograph albums, it seems, and anecdote; if anywhere. ("Do you remember that time. . . ?" "Well, when she was about three she used to. . . .") But photographs and anecdotes are a poor exchange for living recollections, recollections of figures so vivid they seem substantial enough to blot out the light behind them.

Other loves, other acquaintances, people older than ourselves or contemporary with ourselves, we can remember in that fashion, even after a lapse of years, even when such people may have meant little to us. Of our children, of our children's younger selves, virtually nothing remains. When we try to think of them as they once were (perhaps a few months ago!) we have to be content, all too often, with unexpected, unanchored fragments. A forgotten item of clothing seen by chance in a drawer, for example, will perhaps produce not so much a visual image as some sort of tactile reawakening within the self, a "feel" of having handled the small body which the garment once covered. Revisiting, on our own, a place we have been to with our children, we may find them suddenly revisiting us: not as individuals who were then of this height or whose hair was cut in that way, but as *presences* merely, beings whose hands were in our own or slipping away from them, whose voices were raised or silent. What those presences also bring back to us is not so much a recollection of our emotions as of theirs: their eagerness, their curiosity, their anxiety, their readiness to run ahead, their propensity to sudden retreats, their imperious hungers, their collapses into sleepiness or indifference. Only in that context can we recall the sensation, private to us, unknown to them, of having been in charge, of having been under pressure, of having once been parents.

That is all. We can hardly blame ourselves for feeling that it

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isn't enough. The children have gone and have taken with them the emotions they aroused, as if into an abyss deeper and darker than that into which every other passion from the past eventually falls. Passions of sexual love, or of fear, or of ambition, or of the shame or pride we felt as children in the parents we once had—those in some sense are still with us; they remain accessible in the memory, attached to particular scenes or experiences. But the physical and moral passions of parenthood, which any parent knows to be as deep, as startling, as much a remaking of the whole self as any other, turn out also to be as evanescent as the constantly self-transforming bodies which had aroused them. Protectiveness and wonder, burdensome adoration and breathless participation; a sense of being nakedly needed and of needing to be needed; infatuations with shades and textures of skin and hair, with knees and fingernails, with flawless, small eyes and napes of necks, with lips moister and more delicate than any others we have kissed; pleasures of touching, stroking, smelling, gazing, encompassing; fatigues, irritations, bewilderments, clenched anxieties over illnesses and unexplained absences; incredulities at the responsibilities we have assumed and delight in finding our way back to much of what had been lost to us from the time of our own infancy—all there, and all gone. Gone, leaving so few particular, individual, moment-attached tracings or scorings in the nervous system and the cells of memory.

No wonder, then, that there should be dozens upon dozens of works of literature which deal with the relationship between child and parents (or surrogate parents) from the child's point of view; and so few, relatively speaking, which deal with that relationship from the parent's point of view. The absence of literature on the subject—I am not speaking of child-rearing manuals—is one of the reasons why parents are so surprised by the tantalising sensualities and spiritualities of what they go through. No one has really told them what to expect. Like the rest of us, writers can recall, sometimes all too clearly or fondly, what it was like to be a child. But to know what it is to be a parent, or to recall what it was to have been a parent, is a much more elusive and problematical business. Think of all those books about children and their parents, or parent-figures, which make up so much of our literary culture, *Sons and Lovers* and *The Mill on the Floss*, *Jane Eyre* and *David Copperfield*, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *War and Peace*, *Mansfield Park* and *Tom Jones*: all are in effect novels about being a child and having a parent or parents, and about growing out of them, not about being a parent and having a child and having it grow out of you. So are plays like *The Oresteia* or *Romeo and Juliet* or *Hamlet*. (How much we are given of Hamlet's feelings about his mother and stepfather; what ugly, truncated glimpses we are given of their feelings about him.) And so one could go on, almost indefinitely. *The Metamorphosis*, *Swann's Way*, *Great Expectations*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, *The Tin Drum*. . . . And on the other side? One has to struggle to think of them. *Silas Marner*, *Dombey and Son* perhaps, Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, and, indubitably the greatest of all such works, and great partly just because it adopts with such passion the parental point of view, *King Lear*. (Think how easy it would have been to present sympathetically, from their perspective, the problems of the two daughters, Goneril and Regan, confronted as they are with a father who has nothing to do with his time and his energy but to disrupt their domestic arrangements. If only either woman had had a "granny flat" in her castle!) The Bible, interestingly enough, also gives us more of King David's dealings with his errant sons from David's point of view than from theirs; he is the one who really matters, whose hurts and hopes really count; not they and theirs. And that's about all.

None of this (which we take so much for granted that I have never seen it remarked on elsewhere in any form) is accidental. The drama of parenthood from within—and the loss of it, which is part of its drama—remains the great unexplored subject of imaginative writing; in comparison with it supposedly taxing subjects like the end of the world or the inner life of a mad dictator can appear positively banal. The trouble is, though, that the subject is unexplored because it is largely unexplorable. The emotions of parenthood are experienced in a way and at a level distinctive to themselves, and then they vanish, along with the children who occasion them, to whom they are devoted, and who never rest from carrying out their task of transforming themselves, moment by moment, into other beings.

Until at last they succeed to such effect that they cease to be children. "Have you any children?" a well-known Scottish poet was once asked. "No", he replied, in grimly humorous, Scottish fashion, "I have a man and a woman." It goes without saying that his relationship with "his" man and woman, and theirs with him, will be forever affected by the fact that they were once his children; in some respects which will be obvious to both sides, and in others that will be hidden from them, they will continue to respond to one another according to patterns laid down in their earliest years together. It is self-evident, too, that in some cases the relationship between parents and their grown children will be easier and mutually more rewarding than it was before, precisely because it is no longer one of dependence on the one side and control or responsibility on the other.

What happens then, however, is that the balance between responsibility and dependence begins to swing inexorably in the other direction. Just as the parents of young children feel bound to protect and help them, to shield them from the ugliness of life and its dangers, so grown children begin to feel that they have this obligation towards their parents. When they keep silent about events or emotions in their own lives, it is not because they are afraid of their parents' anger or disapproval, as before, but simply because they are indifferent, or because their parents have once again begun to acquire in their eyes something of the innocence and pathos of children; like children, they seem to have become especially prone to mental and physical injury. And indeed, if the parents live long enough, and suffer the illnesses and deprivations which age inevitably brings, they will revert to being children, wrinkled children, impossible children; beings

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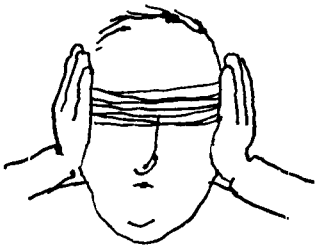
whom their children will care for out of affection, out of pity, out of exasperation, out of regard for the past; hardly out of passion.

Well, one can see the sense of it, if it is not our wills or individual circumstances but the continuation of the race which ultimately determines such matters. Children are lovable, and are loved, precisely because and to the degree that they are vulnerable. Their vulnerability is signalled in every possible fashion: in their stature, the shape of their heads, their halting speech, the softness of their skins, their eager movements. If we were not moved to cherish them by such manifestations of weakness, the race would not survive. The vulnerability of old people, on the other hand, has no such appeal; they have exhausted their usefulness, genetically speaking, and nature has no compunction in making this fact as evident to everyone around them as it makes the charm and beauty of children. However, only megalomaniacs are given to thinking of themselves as representatives of the race or of nature. The rest of us, parents of children and children of parents, are kept busy enough trying to cope as best we can with all the vicissitudes, the plaitings together and unravellings, which are forced in remorseless succession and simultaneity upon us.

Paris Notebook

By Jean-François Revel

"Racism", & Its Delusions



FOUR YEARS AGO, France seemed to have adopted a pre-Marxist system. Was it instead, unknown to all and sundry, entering a pre-Fascist phase? That is certainly the impression an unwary outsider might draw from many recent events, speeches, and articles.

It was in 1979, during a campaign against the New Right, that there was renewed talk of "the Fascist menace." In 1980, the bomb at the Rue Copernic synagogue seemed to confirm the fears of a *nouvelle droite*. Had Paris become Berlin—1933? In 1983, the first electoral gains by the National Front revealed the spread of racism and xenophobia, chiefly aimed at immigrants.

Who but the utterly naive could be simple enough to believe that humanity had eliminated the forces of evil? Claude Lanzmann's fine new film about the Holocaust, *Shoah*, is a reminder that the unthinkable can come to pass. But our respect for the memory of so many martyred Jews should prevent our involving them in present-day controversies—where motives are sometimes suspect. After the Rue Copernic outrage (3 October 1980), thousands of Parisians marched in protest from the Place de la Nation to the Place de la République. I was one of them. Many of us wanted simply to mark our solidarity with the victims. But many organisations and some political parties wanted above all to pin the crime on the extreme Right and, if possible, on French conservatives as a whole. After several days, the police discovered that the murderers came from the Middle East. But there was no suggestion then that the same protesters should stage a second demonstration, this time to denounce the true culprits. The false accusation, it seemed, had been enough.

Despite this uncorrected error, there was similar agitation after the outrage in the Rue des Rosiers (9 August 1982). Looking back on it, *Le Monde* (4 April 1985) declared: "The hypothesis that it was a Fascist crime seemed obvious: it was almost improper to suggest anything else. . . ." Today, the anti-terrorist police know that these hit-men also came from the Middle East. Their links with Damascus and Bulgaria have been established; so has their involvement in the attacks on synagogues in Vienna in August 1981 and Rome in October 1982. A terrorist network run from outside Europe is attacking Jewish centres everywhere.

Why then do some people in France attribute these terrorists' atrocities to some *maladie interne* of French society? After the explosion of a bomb in a cinema showing a festival of Jewish films (29 March 1985) there were further outraged protests. Quite right too: but again the protesters parroted the same cry. Every time, in fact, without the slightest evidence, and before any investigation, the crime is imputed to an alleged upsurge of French anti-Semitism. If it has already reached such abominable proportions, they imply, it must be well on the way to planning genocide!

It is one thing to oppose anti-Semitism. It is quite another to accuse one's compatriots of crimes they have not committed—or which, like an alleged attack on the Marseilles synagogue, are pure fabrications. This is both unjust and dangerous: it risks putting dark ideas into sick heads. In the first stage, the Left accuses the extreme Right. In the second, it assimilates the extreme Right to the Right as a whole. Finally, it asserts or suggests that there are no real democrats except on the Left. "Monsieur Chirac leads the Bonapartist party; Monsieur Chirac is always dreaming of *Brumaire*", exclaimed Pierre Mauroy in the National Assembly on 24 May 1984, exhibiting his acute sense of historical mythology.

Raymond Aron described in his *Memoirs* how, after the Rue Copernic bomb, a journalist tried to get him to say in an interview that the culprit or instigator of the crime was Alain de Benoist and his "New Right." On the same occasion, *L'Humanité* wrote: "Like Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, one seemed to be reading Alain de Benoist." And Maurice Duverger likened the *nouveaux économistes* to the *nouvelle droite*. In that way, everyone was implicated. Liberal economists were identified with a group of political philosophers who in turn were accused of neo-Nazi tendencies and racist homicide. The whole hodgepodge of an amalgam was based on a simple fallacy. The "New Right" is in fact *anti*-liberal, "pagan", anti-American, and in some ways rather pro-Soviet. It is certainly not a popular movement, as the *Front national* has become.

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As soon as the *Front national* gained ground, the Left began to tar all opposition parties with the same brush. It was no longer a mere propaganda battle, because of Le Pen's electoral importance: but the series of equations remained the same. *Le Pen* = *racisme*; racism = extreme Right; extreme Right = Right as a whole; Right as a whole = Fascism. Q.E.D. As René Rémond put it (*Le Monde*, 16 April 1985): "The Left is unwilling to admit that there can be sincere democrats outside its own ranks. . . . It prefers to banish anyone who is to the Right of itself into the outer darkness of the extreme Right. . . ." The Left is certainly pleased to denounce the "Fascist menace" in economic liberalism, now that a resurgent liberalism is the most effective rival of moribund Socialism—which, incidentally, is not above stealing classically liberal ideas.

At a *soirée contre le racisme* at the Paris *Mutualité* (on 21 February 1985), the audience howled down speakers from the liberal opposition even before they had reached the podium. Anti-racism is a universal moral imperative: it affirms the absolute value of human beings. To let it degenerate into a rallying-cry for the local elections is to show scant respect for ethical precepts. Left-wing parties are not the sole possessors of a sense of good and evil. And even as political chicanery, such exaggeration can hardly pay. When Mitterrand's Prime Minister, Laurent Fabius, claims to see no great difference now between the Right and the extreme Right, does he realise the enormity of what he is saying? If he were correct, some 60-65% of the French people would be what the Socialists now call "Fascists." Either this is false—in which case there is no excuse for such irresponsible remarks—or, if it be true, France is in a desperate condition, for which the Socialists must answer to the nation.

IT IS AS IF the Left, suddenly bereft of ideology and policies, were reinstating by means of "the Fascist menace" the Mainchaean universe it deeply needs. Dealing with economics, social welfare, industrial modernisation, or freedom of the press and education, all Europe's Socialist parties, once they have come to power, tend to fall back on neo-liberal policies—or on simple realism. Even Defence, Foreign Policy, and the "Third World" no longer divide Socialists from liberals, especially in France, along traditional lines of battle.

How then can the Left assert its identity? The French Communist Party goes on hibernating in its ideological permafrost, hoping to survive in this frozen condition until the third millennium. The Socialist Party is mobilising for its fight against the *peste brune*. This sacred cause sanctifies its champions, even if they are outvoted. Given that the "political majority" in France has seldom coincided so neatly with its "sociological majority", Socialists are more and more comforting themselves with the belief that the "rise of Fascism" gives them duties which transcend electoral arithmetic.

Unfortunately, "The Pen Case"—to borrow the title of a precise and scrupulous new book by Eric Roussel (published by J.-C. Lattès)—is ill-suited to political Manichaeism. The same wolf preys on every flock. An April poll conducted by the *Institut français de l'opinion publique* for *Le Point* showed that Arabs were most unpopular among working-class people and least unpopular among industrialists, big and small business, and the liberal professions. This makes it easier to understand why almost one-third of those voting for the *Front national* are *ouvriers*, and 22% former supporters of President Mitterrand. Racist prejudice is inversely proportional to the degree of education; but it affects all social classes and all political parties. It cannot therefore be exploited in a neat electoral battle in which *les bons et les méchants*, the goodies and the baddies, obediently play their allotted roles. Besides, "racism" is not the sole cause of opposition to immigration, or of what immigrants suffer.

Nor does xenophobia alone explain the rise of the *Front national*. Ignoring the usual clichés, *Sud-Ouest* published (on 28 March) a geographical comparison between areas of high unemployment and those where the Left had lost ground since 1981. Out of 26 *départements* where more than 9% of the electorate voted for the *Front national* in the canton elections, eleven were places where unemployment had grown by 70% or more since 1981. In the Loire, a strongly working-class area with few immigrants but great economic distress, 10.7% of electors voted for Le Pen's party, while the vote for the President's supporters fell from 52.8% to 33.9%. Le Pen made similar gains in Lorraine and Alsace, where once again there are very few immigrants.

It is time to reject two false comparisons, both of them odious and dangerous. The first would blame French society for anti-Semitic outrages committed by international terrorists. The second would have us believe that the tensions created by immigration amount to a rebirth of ideological, totalitarian racism—a revival of a Nazi party, with its systematic, pseudo-scientific doctrine of racial inequality. In fact, the challenge we face today is less fundamental but more difficult. An imminent catastrophe, it is true, will always find soothsayers. But those who fail to solve real problems often take refuge in an artificial sense of tragedy.

The Hidden Face of the Multinationals

Paris

WHEN François Mitterrand was still defending his nationalisation policy, back in 1982, he used to insist that in many cases the purpose of nationalising an enterprise was to save it from "internationalisation." In other words, State capitalism is a way of keeping the multinationals in check.

For "the *multis*" have long held pride of place in the

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demonology of the Left. "The multinationals play the Spain card" was *L'Humanité*'s lament on 12 June, concerning that country's entry into the EEC, as if the advent of foreign capital was self-evidently calamitous. The socialists of 1985 are keeping the Communists at arm's length, and surreptitiously discarding their former dogmas, on this and on several other points. "We are entering a world in which, increasingly, the only practicable economic and technological projects must be international ones." So said Laurent Fabius (on 8 June at the Le Bourget Air Show, where he accompanied the Indian Prime Minister). No doubt it was cooperation between States that he mainly had in mind, but not exclusively; because the Council of Ministers recently took a number of measures designed to attract foreign investment, simplifying the starting-and-hiring formalities for subsidiaries of multinational companies, and reducing taxation on their non-French managerial personnel.

What is this—under-the-counter liberalism? Fabius expects these measures of relaxation to create jobs, as they have already begun to do, and to stimulate some healthy competition for French Firms. Once they have become more productive, our own enterprises may well be able to create more subsidiaries abroad. That is how the virtues and realities of the multinational economic system are being discovered. The presidential recipe of 1982 is being reversed: today we are hopeful that Internationalisation will counteract the dismal effects of Nationalisation.

The extensive scale of France's difficulties has driven home the perception that the recovery will have to be equally international. If our emergence from the crisis is subject to conditions such as "redeployment . . . modernisation . . . invention . . . initiative . . . technology . . . and response-to-the-market", it is impossible to ignore the conclusion that these conditions can only be fulfilled by some new form of international complementarity.

In its latest report, *Commercial Policy and Prosperity* (Geneva, 1985), GATT rejects the illusion that protectionism safeguards jobs; in fact, it creates unemployment. Protection penalises the consumer by raising the price of products whose variety and quality are falling. It penalises the taxpayer by raising those taxes which are imposed in order to finance state subsidies. It penalises the worker by drying up the creation of genuinely new jobs. And it penalises the investor by shrinking the outlets for business abroad. Granted the damaging effect of artificial limitations on free exchange, then the same diagnosis must apply to restrictions on free choice in the geographical location of new enterprises. By the well-tried law of comparative advantage, it is surely in the general interest of mankind for each product to be manufactured where it can be done at the lowest cost and with the best possible quality. The vendor then buys other products manufactured elsewhere under the same conditions.

No matter whether they are State-owned or in private hands, enterprises that work solely on a national scale are ill-adapted to this planetary market with its world-wide, changing reciprocity. They tend to cling to their outdated methods and equipment. But the general long-term decline in protectionism now prevents them from holding out indefinitely; that is why we have seen the rise, particularly since the 1960s, of the phenomenon of the multinational company.

At the same time we have seen a mounting campaign to depict these firms as vultures gorging on the blood of the world, starving it and polluting it as they go. Denounced as the last and most diabolical incarnation of Capitalism (evil by definition) and of Imperialism (essentially American), the multinationals have found themselves the target of converging attacks from various directions, some of them from agencies created expressly for the purpose. A body calling itself the Transnational Institute (TNI), based in Washington, sponsors a "Transnational Information Exchange (TIE)", and cooperates with an Institute for Policy Studies (IPS), with the World Federation of Trade Unions (headquarters in Prague), and with the inevitable World Council of Churches, which is capable of writing (in its Document No. 2-3, Geneva, 1982) that "the transnational companies constitute one of the forms of power which are the greatest obstacle to human development and exert the most pernicious influence upon it. . . ." Amid this chorus, a body called "the Berne Declaration Group" even sounds an anti-Swiss note. It identifies "a chain of cause and effect between the investments of the multinationals and hunger in the Third World." These words are from an article published in *Mother Jones*, an organ of the IPS and the WCC through their common subsidiary TIE (August 1983). All these organisations receive the unofficial support of the pro-Soviet Peace Council (which in 1983 issued an "action programme" aimed at dismantling the multinationals) as well as the very official support of UNESCO and of several other UN agencies.

For more than six years this acronymic armada has been firing off its broadsides, at (among others) Nestlé, accused of killing Third World children because its powdered milk is substituted for breast-feeding, or again of encouraging peasants to give up planting food crops in favour of growing coffee beans for export. Other offensives against other firms have called for bans on pesticides and insecticides, allegedly sold in the interests of the greedy manufacturers alone, being useless to the farmer in the field. Extending the indictment, the so-called Non-Aligned countries (in particular the Latin-American ones) constantly lament political "dependence" on the United States—the natural outcome, according to them, of economic dependence on the multinationals.

THE IDEOLOGICAL PASSION tells us about the psychology of those who are subject to it, not about the facts, the evidence, the truth of things. It happens, for example, that most multinationals are not—or are no longer—American. Between 1960 and 1980 the percentage of investment by American firms in foreign subsidiaries fell from 49 to 42% of the world total, and was exceeded by the figure for European firms, at 44%. The Japanese increased their share from 0.7 to 7.3% of the total. Between 1966 and 1980 the ratio of US investments in Europe to European in the USA was reversed, and is now in favour of Europe. The Americans have also lost their dominant position as investors in Latin America. For the last ten years, direct European investment in Brazil has been higher, with 43% of the total, than US

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investment, which has fallen from 48 to 32% of foreign holdings.

In addition, new multinationals are springing up from bases in the industrialising countries: in Brazil itself, in Mexico and India, for example. The biggest do not necessarily come from the biggest countries: Switzerland stands at the top of the world market in chemistry and pharmaceutical products (with Ciba-Geigy, Hoffmann-Laroche, and Sandoz). The giant Philips is Dutch. Since a multinational is a firm that does not confine itself to exporting its products but transfers capital, factories, jobs and technology to several foreign countries, it may happen that its turnover abroad is greater than at home.

Another misconception is the belief that multinationals are bound to be colossal. But in his book on the multinationals in the "*Que sais-je?*" series (Presses Universitaires de France), M. Ghertman points out that there are an increasing number of small and medium-sized multinationals. Le Creuset, the French manufacturer of cooking wares, owns a factory in North Carolina which has done very well in the United States; and recently I watched on the TV economic magazine programme *L'Enjeu* a report about France's "*roi de la mezzanine*" who started with 6,000 francs and now owns innumerable branches just about everywhere. . . .

The anti-capitalist crusaders are equally mistaken when they suppose that with "the multis" they are waging militant class war against bourgeois ownership and private profit. There are many state-owned multinationals—in France, for instance, Renault, Elf-Aquitaine, Rhône-Poulenc, or Saint-Gobain. There are even Communist multinationals, which rank among the most powerful—Ferchimex, Wozchod Hendelsbank, Slava, Scaldia-Volga, or the Hungarian Tungsram. Yet the odd thing is that when, during the last decade, the West's chambers of commerce, the OECD and the US Senate, took it upon themselves to issue "codes of conduct" for the use of multinational companies, the USSR and its satellites (and their Western friends, cited above) broke into indignant protestations that the rules laid down should govern only the Western companies, and that in no case would the Eastern multinationals respect them! Likewise, the profit motive is blamed—and rightly condemned!—for the toxic emissions produced by Hoffmann-Laroche in Milan, or Union Carbide in India; but no such morally rigorous verdict was pronounced against PEMEX, the Mexican state oil company, when it was responsible for an explosion which caused thousands of casualties.

AS FOR THE LEADERS of the *tiers monde*, they tend to adopt an ambiguous attitude towards the capitalist multinationals. By their rhetoric they revile them; by their behaviour, they strive to attract them. Quite rightly, in view of the wretched condition of the "militant" régimes which have kept them out—Guinea, Mozambique, Angola, Madagascar, Ethiopia—and considering the millions of victims of the "militant" policies followed by their ideologised governments. These leaders are well aware that agriculture will not improve without fertilisers and pesticides. They know that mothers usually resort to powdered milk only when their own has dried up; and that whereas Nestlé can control the quality of its product it cannot guarantee the polluted water which is too often used to dilute it. They know that a field of coffee brings the peasant two or three times as much as a field of millet, and that the exterminating power of Crunch remains to be proved.

The real problem for the poor countries stems from *too small* a multinational presence, not the reverse; more than three-quarters of present-day multinational investment from the developed countries goes to other developed countries, barely a quarter to the developing countries (and that share is diminishing). In reality, the responsibility for "underdevelopment" belongs much more to authoritarian state planning than to the multinationals. Freedom of action for the latter has often borne fruit, where it has been attracted, encouraged, or even tolerated.

Let's not lose sight of the fact that in the much-ignored maxim, "*laissez-faire*", the important word is "*faire*."

J.-F.R.

A Gentle Demolition

Let us summon what real love there was
and free it now, before it is too late.
No conditions. Our rules and very private
statutes need repeal as every clause
at once turns advocate to plead the cause
of separation—urging us to hate
and so survive. We cannot legislate
and love, nor barter promises as laws.
And so, before we're forced to play the prison-
scenes of our particular despair,
that precedents and repetitious passion
will in time condemn us to, let's tear
this court-house down—a gentle demolition;
then leave as friends or lawyers might—together.

Ron Butlin

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A Special Book Section

Biography

No Stone Unturned

On the Nature of Biography—By RICHARD ORMROD

BIOGRAPHY at its most basic level, like the novel, has plot, character, theme and style, and is a form of fiction based on facts —an attempt to reconstruct imaginatively from a basis of evidence. But as Virginia Woolf observed, "The novelist is free; the biographer is tied."[1] He is: first to externally verifiable fact, and secondly to interpretative truth. There is no primary creation: he does not have to invent plot or character. Because of this Virginia Woolf and others have maintained that biography is "lived at a lower degree of tension" than poetry or fiction. I suspect that few working biographers would agree. The time, energy, tact, and expense exerted in the long pilgrimage (it can turn, at any moment, into an obstacle race or a scene from a Gothic novel) that precedes publication is hardly conducive to nervous equilibrium and low blood-pressure.

The unwritten brief of the biographer is to present, with authenticity and accuracy, a sympathetic and fully-rounded portrait of his subject's life and personality. His art is akin to that of the portrait painter rather than the photographer, and its primary requisite is respect for "warts and all" truth. Biography emphasises, indeed actively celebrates, *individuality*—those very aspects of a person which make them unique. Something of that uniqueness always defies complete definition, eludes the most earnest endeavours to pin it down. One can never capture the *real person* between the covers of a book: only, at best, an approximation. That is the fascination, and the frustration, of biography. Perhaps one has to be something of a masochist to enjoy it.

One has, in all honesty, to explode the myth of objectivity at the outset. It is, in any case, undesirable, and impossible in anything beyond a list of facts and dates: for as soon as description, evaluation, and interpretation come in, so does subjectivity. The biographer is partisan by definition, since he has chosen, out of an infinite number of possibilities, to write about *one* particular person. How was his choice arrived at in the first place? There has to be some initial empathy towards, attraction to, or degree of identification with, the subject. The changing "relationship" between biographer and—especially the dead—biographee is worth a study in its own right.

Hesketh Pearson said that "the biographer must on the whole like his subject, because truth is revealed to sympathy, concealed from antipathy." This remark is sharply illustrated by a recent biography of Robert Lowell, written with such evident loathing that one of the women central to his life remarked that she could not recognise the man she had known. At the other extreme are those who deny faults or failings in their subjects, as Edmund Gosse said widows tend to in the case of their dead husbands. But as Dr Johnson remarked in *The Rambler*, "If we owe regard to the dead, there is yet more respect to be paid to truth"; and biography at best is a species of revealed truth. If written "in a spirit of fine, discriminative sympathy" it can, as Lawrence said of the novel, "inform and lead into new places the flow of our sympathetic consciousness."[2]

Una, Lady Troubridge, the subject of my own first biography, felt about Charles II much as I did about her when she wrote:

> "The feeling of affinity . . . of instinctive and unfailing sympathy . . . is a very mysterious phenomenon even when it is felt for the living. . . . It becomes even less easy to understand when this feeling . . . selects as its objective a man or woman whom, in the nature of things, one can never have met in this life. . . ."

Perhaps "instinctive" is the operative word. As with any other important choice, such as career or marriage partner, non-rational, accidental, or coincidental factors play a part; in my case the random sighting of an obnoxious article about Una's friend Radclyffe Hall. The element of search, conscious or otherwise, is present long before the conceptual moment that clinches into a certainty. Once that has happened the biographer is like a medieval crusader in search of the Holy Grail—what will he not do to secure it? In this connection *The Aspern Papers* should perhaps be required reading for all novice biographers.

[1] Virginia Woolf, "The Art of Biography", in *The Death of a Moth & Other Essays* (1942).
[2] D. H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, p.104.

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THE METHODOLOGY is complex. The first thing is to establish a basic chronology of events, people, and places, using the public record offices for birth, marriage and death certificates or wills, and consulting old trade directories, electoral and parish registers, and county archives. Tracing families forwards in time, to locate descendants, is always more difficult than tracing backwards to establish ancestry, at least to 1837. Regimental, academic, civil service and similar records are all easily available. Many private collections of letters, diaries and manuscripts are lodged with academic institutes and libraries, such as the Humanities Research Center at Austin, Texas, or the Berg Collection in New York. Reading University intends to put all locations of such material on computer to aid future researchers. However, it is in the private sector such as family papers that the vital finds are usually made, and this is where the biographer does his real sleuthing. (As people write fewer journals and letters than previously, this first-hand source will become less available, whereas more general information about the individual's life will be publicly accessible on computer.)

In the case of Lady Troubridge, various branches of the family proved to have unpublished letters, photograph albums, sketch-books and other items; and twenty years of unpublished (and unread) diaries turned up in an old tin trunk in a Rome garage—a biographer's gold-mine. Another valuable find was the original transcripts of séances, lodged untouched with the Society for Psychical Research since 1916. The notes to these sittings provided much day-to-day domestic and social detail. There seems also to be a snowball effect, one thing or person leading to another.

Like Micawber, the biographer lives in the perpetual hope of something turning up, and it does: an old man dies in squalor and a packet of 40 letters, written to him years before by someone now well-known (Denton Welch), turns up under a cushion—the only thing of value the man, unwittingly, possessed.

ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT things to handle is contradictory primary testimony—where, say, brother and sister offer radically different accounts of the same incident or person. When interviewing relations or friends of the subject it is important not to phrase questions so as to "lead" the witness or plant suggestions in his mind. Everything used evidentially must be cross-referred and verified, and inaccuracies corrected. The biographer who values his professional integrity will never "fill in the gaps" between the known and the unknown, retail unfounded supposition or gossip as truth, or use poetic or any other kind of licence. He needs to be insightful and discriminating, to have an excellent memory (and a good filing system), to be logical and well organised. Having an obsessional character is a great advantage.

By far the most dangerous and potentially misleading material for the biographer is that written by the subject himself, especially memoirs and autobiographies. Comparing Richard Church's autobiography [3] with his diaries (all

[3] Richard Church, *Over the Bridge* (1955).

Michael Meyer

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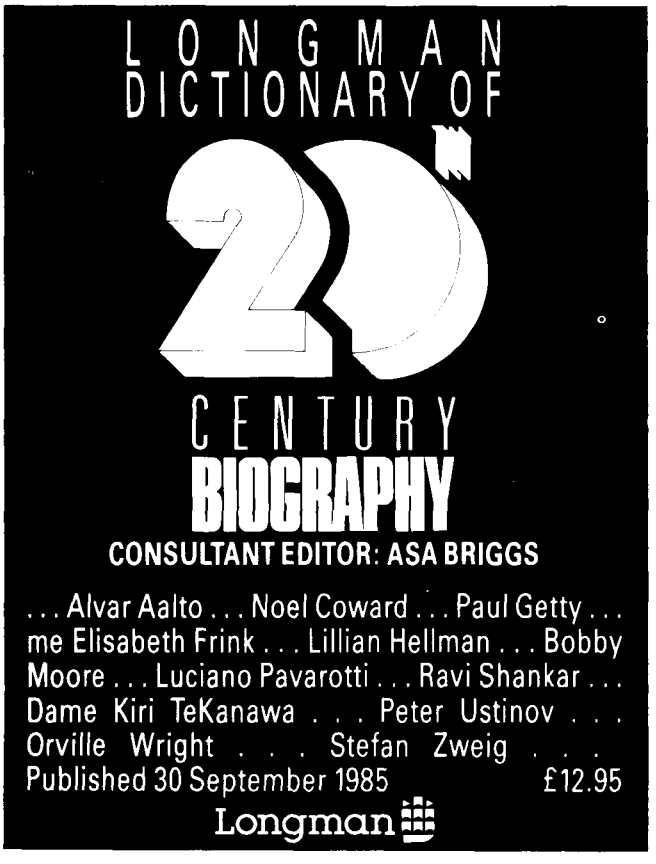
unpublished) covering the same period of his life, I was amazed by the distortions, omissions, and misrepresentations in the former. Mary Lou Kohfeldt makes a similar point about Lady Gregory's autobiography, which as well as muddling chronology is "a ragbag of . . . anecdotes, unconnected snippets from letters and diaries, brief insights, and trivia." In addition, "The parts she did not put in her final version are usually more interesting than those she did. . . ." She eliminated all trace of her adulterous affair with Wilfred Blunt, and "her deepest instinct was to hide."[4] David Heymann, Barbara Hutton's biographer, as well as being granted a series of interviews with her in the last two years of her life, was given free access to "a trunkload of memorabilia", including diaries, letters, and poems. The biography was so reconstructed from these that "it can almost be said that she wrote her own." However, on at least one occasion he corrected her autobiographical statement with "The simple truth is that Barbara was lying."[5]

Autobiographies, simply, cannot be taken at face value, and the biographer does well to regard them with a healthy suspicion. Like confessions to psychiatrists or priests, they tend to be highly selective, partial accounts in which memory and fantasy intermingle. The autobiographer is inevitably an image-builder who wishes not to accuse but to justify himself; to create sympathy rather than antipathy. Valentine Ackland's autobiographical *For Sylvia: An Honest Account*[6] is a curious, confessional document, trying perhaps to be its own therapeutic absolution, partial, subjective, and impressionistic in a way biography can never be. The apparent frankness is itself a mask behind which much is hidden. Even the revelations of stealing, lying, and lust are self-aggrandising: "I wonder if anyone in the world was ever so idiotically vile as I was . . . ", whereas the biographer deflects attention away from himself to his subject.

Michael De-la-Noy[7] remarked recently that he liked to use letters, diaries, and autobiography to let the subject "tell his own story as far as possible." While in many ways an admirable attitude, adopted by many biographers, this blurring of the line between autobiography and biography may allow the incorporation of many subjective errors and misrepresentations. There is inevitably *some* in-built distortion—everyone knows that quotations from letters, diaries, and so on, can, like statistics, be made to prove what one wants to prove or disprove—but generally speaking the biographer has no personal *angst* to grind comparable to the autobiographer. It is wiser to regard autobiography as just one source among many than as gospel truth.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ONCE THE MATERIAL has been gathered together and the folders are bursting at the edges, the biographer is confronted with the problem of presentation. In the 18th century novels were written like biographies (such as *Joseph Andrews*, in which Fielding remarks with unconscious irony, "It is most certain that truth is to be found only in the works of those who celebrate the lives of great men, and are commonly called biographers"), whereas now biographies are written very often as straight narrative, like novels (such as John Wain's recent life of Johnson), with little direct quotation. Many are merely descriptive and offer little analytical commentary, which seems as *passé* as the direct authorial voice in the novel.

Group biographies, popular from Suetonius to Strachey, are a useful way of spreading thinly what cannot be done in more depth owing to the paucity of material.[8] They often take the form of a series of separate essays linked by an Introduction and some common theme. *The Souls*[9] is such a book, recalling a "group of high-minded, high-spirited friends", intelligent, aristocratic, a kind of private *Mensa*, who included in their numbers A. J. Balfour, Herbert Asquith, Oscar Wilde, Lady Desborough. Superficiality is the problem with such presentation: these essays whet an appetite they fail to satisfy.

The changing ethics of biography (beginning perhaps with Froude's *Carlyle*) have altered the writer's sense of responsibility towards both his subject and the public. The new

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[4] *Lady Gregory: The Woman Behind the Irish Renaissance.* By MARY LOU KOHFELDT. André Deutsch, £12.95.

[5] *Poor Little Rich Girl: The Life and Legend of Barbara Hutton.* By DAVID HEYMANN. Hutchinson, £12.95.

[6] *For Sylvia: An Honest Account.* By VALENTINE ACKLAND. Chatto & Windus, £8.95.

[7] Author of *Denton Welch: The Making of a Writer* (Viking, £12.95) and editor of *The Journals of Denton Welch* (Allison & Busby, £14.95).

[8] Such as *Charlotte Mew and Her Friends.* By PENELOPE FITZGERALD. Collins, £12.95.

[9] *The Souls: An Elite in English Society 1885-1930.* By JANE ABDY and CHARLOTTE GERE. Sidgwick & Jackson, £6.95.

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candour, seen for instance in Michael Holroyd's *Lytton Strachey*, Nigel Nicolson's *Portrait of a Marriage*, and Susan Cheever's *Home Before Dark*, not only allows but almost compels the biographer to tell "the whole truth and nothing but the truth." The public demands it, irrespective of whether the biographee would have liked it: it is the price of fame. Since so many people leave behind them letters, diaries and other records which they could equally well have destroyed, may it not be reasonable to surmise that they had half an eye on posthumous publication or use? The biographer has become something of a licensed *voyeur*, permitted to enquire (some would say pry) into those normally private areas of a person's life: sexuality, medical history, financial affairs. No stone now remains unturned: the expurgated or idealised biography is no more. Surely, this can only be to the good. It extends the power of the biographer to bring his subject more fully alive. It enables Mary Lou Kohfeldt to say of Lady Gregory: "What did she want? What the 'little-welcomed girl' at Roxborough had learned to want without daring to think it: to be lifted above the brothers and sisters. Under cover of service, she aimed for personal glory, and she added another layer to her emotional camouflage, the primary layer of which was her widow's black, worn when she was anything but mourning", while also admitting to a "delightful admiration . . . for her character." This biographer has no illusions about her subject and gives us none.

To interpret a novel is a work of criticism: the act of assessing and evaluating. To interpret a human life, perhaps attempt to assess and evaluate its meaning and significance, is an act of presumption normally confined to theologians and psychiatrists. But biography is more than an act of presumption which may or may not justify itself; and the biographer more than a mediator, advocate, or apologist. It is a humane art, and as Pope observed, "The proper study of mankind is Man." The three requisites which Coleridge thought necessary to form the poet—Sensibility, Imagination, and Power of Association—are equally necessary to the biographer: for biography itself, like the metaphysical conceit, brings together an association of disparates into a new, compelling whole.

The Only Metaphysical Man

A Re-examination of Otto Rank—By MICHAEL SHEPHERD

OTTO WHO? To many students of contemporary psychoanalysis the name of Otto Rank (1884-1939) is unlikely to figure among its most prominent exemplars. He was, the more knowledgeable would probably assert, an unimportant renegade who wrote about the trauma of birth and emigrated to America where he was regarded as a controversial, solitary figure, now largely forgotten.

The facts of the matter are more complex and much more interesting. Otto Who's surname was in fact Rosenfeld, not Rank, and his background differed from that of the founding fathers of psychoanalysis in several respects. He was the youngest son of a poor Viennese immigrant Jewish family; his father was an uncultivated artisan of modest means and unsympathetic disposition. In his diary the boy summed up his childhood: "I grew up, left to myself, without education, without friends, without books." He was a sickly youth, of diminutive stature and unprepossessing appearance ("the short Dr. Caligari body, the uneven teeth" were to impress a later admirer), whose life was changed at the age of fifteen by that curious emotional cataclysm which overwhelms certain gifted adolescents, sweeping them towards a lifelong preoccupation with ideas and the inner life. The diaries, written between his eighteenth and twenty-first year, record the efforts of a born intellectual working as a locksmith in conditions of material poverty and drawing on books, music and theatre to help discover an identity. At the age of nineteen he symbolised his aspirations by formally renouncing his religious faith and adopting a non-Jewish surname that was borrowed, significantly, from a character in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*.

The strain was clearly considerable. It led to a consultation with the family doctor, Alfred Adler, who introduced the youngster to first the writings and then, at the age of twenty-one, to the person of Sigmund Freud. For the next 20 years Rank was to play a central part in the psychoanalytical movement. In his capacity as salaried secretary of what became the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society from 1906 to 1915, and then as editor and publisher of several journals, he proved himself an indispensable and indefatigable worker, his leader's closest associate in the movement and seemingly his master's voice. His role was well defined and acknowledged by one of his colleagues in the "inner circle":

> "Rank would have made the ideal private secretary, and indeed he functioned in this way to Freud in many respects. He was always willing, never complained of any burden put upon him, was a man of all work for turning himself to any task, and he was extraordinarily resourceful. He was highly intelligent and quick-witted."

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But this long period of apparent subservience concealed Rank's own individual development. The little outsider, without a medical qualification, socially inferior, largely self-educated, began to mature. He obtained a doctorate in his spare time, treated patients and wrote incessantly on psychoanalytical topics with an evident bias towards artistic activity, myth and legend. His early works include such studies as *The Don Juan Legend, The Double, The Incest Motif,* and *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero.*

Marriage and his experiences during the First World War further increased Rank's self-confidence and sense of independence, and in 1924 he emerged as his own man with the publication of *The Trauma of Birth*, a book which not merely modified but challenged some of Freud's central tenets. Stern disapproval and a brief period of reconciliation were followed by the inevitable sentence of excommunication. Rank and Freud met for the last time in 1926, and Rank's name and work were thenceforward virtually expunged from the official history of the psychoanalytical movement. In Ernest Jones's biography of Freud he is said to have developed "psychotic manifestations that revealed themselves in, among other ways, a turning away from Freud and his doctrines."

LIKE SO MUCH in that fanciful book, the interpretation fails to fit the facts. On leaving Vienna, Rank continued to work as a psychotherapist, though of an increasingly heterodox type, in Paris and New York, eventually settling in the United States where he achieved success despite initial difficulties and eventually became something of a cult-figure. During this phase of his life he met and treated several prominent people, among whom the writer Anaïs Nin was the most significant. He eventually divorced his first wife and married his devoted secretary. Towards the end of his life he discovered Mark Twain, and even signed some of his letters "Huck." Any possibility of his becoming Otto Finn, however, was erased by his early death at the age of fifty-five.

This material may be found, not without difficulty, in *Acts of Will*,[1] E. James Lieberman's long, sprawling biography. Here is an example of Dr Lieberman's style:

> "It was a titanic hour: Henry 'phoned Anaïs excitedly that night and penned a fourteen-page letter to her the next day. The gangling Brooklyn refugee felt that the little Viennese analyst had probed his core. Miller, 41 and working on the *Tropic of Cancer*, was carried to his second wife, June, who could be equally comfortable in bed with a woman, with Henry, or with both. For a time she and Anaïs were fast friends who commiserated about Miller; they intermittently succored and shook his large but vulnerable ego."

The book is repetitious, poorly constructed and unsophisticated to a degree. Much of the narrative is taken up with Freud and his followers, whose back-biting and infighting were seemingly fuelled by the jealousy and ill-will that characterise most sectarian squabbles and contrast so pointedly with the pretentiousness of their claims to understand human nature. Lieberman's heavy-handed presentation is particularly out of place in attempting to catch the essence of a man so elusive and secretive as Otto Rank.

FORTUNATELY THERE IS to be found a far more vivid portrait in the pages of Anaïs Nin's journals.[2] Encased as she was in her narcissistic world, this remarkable woman, like Lou Andreas-Salomé before her, was drawn by the bugle-call of Eros to become for a time a camp-follower of the psychoanalytical battalion. She brings Rank to life in a single passage:

> "Background: Books, shining and colorful books, many of them bound, in many languages. They form the wall against which I see him. Impression of keenness, alertness, curiosity. The opposite of the automatic ready formula and filing-away. The fire he brings to it, as if he felt a great exhilaration in these adventures and explorations. He gets a joy from it. It is no wonder he has evolved what he calls a dynamic analysis, swift, like an emotional shock treatment. Direct, short-cut, and outrageous, according to the old methods. His joyousness and activity immediately relieve one's pain, the neurotic knot which ties up one's faculties in a vicious circle of conflict, paralysis, more conflict, guilt, atonement, punishment, and more guilt. Immediately I felt air and space, movement, vitality, joy of detecting, divining. The spaciousness of his mind. The fine dexterity and muscular power. The swift-changing colors of his own moods. The swiftness of his rhythm, because intuitive and subtle. I trust him. We are far from the banalities and clichés of orthodox psychoanalysis.
>
> I sense an intelligence rendered clairvoyant by feeling.
>
> I sense an artist."

Anaïs Nin's relationship to Rank was a close one— "from patient to Muse to lover", says the blurb more bluntly than Lieberman's clotted prose. She repaid her debt handsomely: "Give back pleasure, music, self-forgetting for all that he gave me." And she goes on:

> "I unleashed a flow of confidences. He had written poetry and plays, he had wanted to be a writer before he came into contact with Dr. Freud. I resuscitated a submerged part of Rank's personality. 'I have not talked about myself for thirty years or even before that.'
>
> What will happen to this writer who lived mute and concealed behind the fact of the doctor?"

Some months later, she answered her own question, concluding that the cause of his "tragic personal life" was too little spontaneity, too much will.

WHAT, IN RETROSPECT, are we to make of the man and his

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[1] *Acts of Will: The Life and Work of Otto Rank*. By E. JAMES LIEBERMAN. Collier Macmillan, £28.95.

[2] Anaïs Nin, *Journals*, ed. G. Stuhlmann, Vol I, 1931-34 (Peter Owen, 1970).

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achievements? Within a psychoanalytical frame of reference Rank emerges as no more than another heresiarch, possibly occupying a special role as one of Freud's former favourites. His earlier books and papers are of some interest because of their attempts to extend Freudian theory to the realms of art and culture, but his writings now appear turgid in thought and expression, clearly rooted in the tradition of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer with a gloss of sexual psychopathology. Lieberman's description of him as "the consummate eclectic" covers this phase of his career. His later work shows him attempting to develop his own ideas via *The Trauma of Birth, Truth and Reality, Modern Education, Art and Artist,* and the revealingly entitled *Beyond Psychology*. His posthumous influence was extended by the Otto Rank Association, which lasted from 1965 to 1982. Some of his ideas have been adopted and adapted by others, most notably by Arthur Janov.

The most significant aspect of Rank's career, however, was his steadily increasing disillusionment with the creed on which he had been nurtured. Towards the end of his life he would surely have endorsed Janet Malcolm's opinion that "The crowning paradox of psychoanalysis is the near-uselessness of its insights. To 'make the unconscious conscious'—the program of psychoanalytic therapy—is to pour water into a sieve. The moisture that remains on the surface of the mesh is the benefit of analysis."[3]

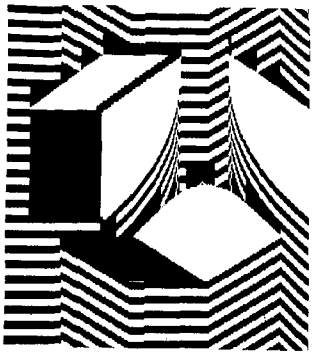
The last word comes most fittingly from Anaïs Nin:

> "I entered with impunity the world of psychoanalysis, the great destroyer of illusion, the great realist. I entered that world, saw Rank's files, read his books, but I found in the world of psychoanalysis the only metaphysical man in it: Rank."

[3] *In the Freud Archives*. By JANET MALCOLM. Jonathan Cape, £8.95.

A Framework for Carrying On?

Roll on Europe—By JOHN PINDER



MARSHALL AID was British economic diplomacy's finest hour, when the men from Whitehall brought sense and flair to the task of leading the European response to the large-minded American offer. At the centre of it all was Eric Roll, whose *Crowded Hours*[1] tells the story, not so much of his life as of his times as he experienced them. A leading representative of what was then Western Europe's leading power (and clearly in his element, with his background of a former Professor of Economics who had learnt the skills of transatlantic diplomacy in the British Food Mission and Combined Food Board in Washington during the War), he was the chairman of powerful committees that devised the European economic programmes and recommended the sharing-out of aid.

Marshall Aid was the highest peak in a great range of Western post-War cooperation which shaped a world strikingly different from that of the 1920s and '30s. So Roll and his colleagues from the West European countries who had worked together on the Marshall Plan in the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation became "a sort of stage army", acting together again in various combinations in other international events and organisations. Roll served in one of this army's outposts, as Executive Director of the International Sugar Council; nearer the centre, as Chairman of NATO's Economic and Finance Committee; and at headquarters as Britain's Economic Minister in Washington and Executive Director of the Boards of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

But this range of international cooperation was only one half of what was achieved by "The Creation", as Acheson and other Americans who had been in on it came to call, perhaps immodestly but surely justifiably, the work of establishing the post-War order.[2] The other half, of which the product was the European Community, was a less comfortable experience for Britain and also for Roll.

Divergences of approach soon emerged between the Continentals (backed by the Americans), who wanted to build the OEEC into a European union, and the British who would have preferred to wind it down. These differences became acute in 1950 with the British reaction against the Schuman Plan establishing the European Coal and Steel Community, which Schuman declared to be "the first concrete foundation of a European federation" while the British found the prospect of a progressive abandonment of national sovereignty, as Roll puts it, "repulsive." Great hopes were raised on the Continent and in the US that the next proposal, for a European Defence Community, would lead direct to federation by the mid-1950s. Roll's only comment on the French National Assembly's decision to sink the EDC in 1954 is that the NATO Economic and Financial Board was "saved from a continuation of the bickering" between Britain and its NATO partners over the EDC

[1] *Crowded Hours*. By ERIC ROLL. Faber and Faber, £15.00.
[2] See Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation* (1969).

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YALE

A Mid-Victorian Feminist, Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon

Sheila R. Herstein

Bodichon—co-founder of the first women's college at Cambridge, member of George Eliot's circle, and organizer of the first formal committee to promote women's rights in England—was a pioneer British feminist. This book discusses her fascinating and singular life, placing it in the context of Victorian reform movements and the political, social, and religious environment in which she lived. **£16.95**

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A born *raconteuse*, Madame Lucie relates a century of tales—about her childhood and her courtships, about the gaiety of the 1920s and the grimness of wartime France. We mourn our last glimpse of her, an aged, frail woman, too preoccupied with keeping her body alive to recapture any more of the past. The overall effect is an unusual, richly textured image of modern France—a moving, engrossing, entertaining, and valuable insight into French culture and society. **£14.95**

Act of Portrayal

Eakins, Sargent, James

David M. Lubin

This important work applies structuralist methods of criticism to three artistic and literary works from the 1880s—Eakins' *The Agnew Clinic*, Sargent's *The Boit Children*, and James' *The Portrait of a Lady*—and concludes that American portraiture of this period was concerned at all levels with matters of sexual difference. **£20.00**

Janáček and Brod

Charles Susskind

This book is an account of the remarkable and intimate friendship between the twentieth-century Czech composer and his literary collaborator, Max Brod, best known as the biographer of Franz Kafka. Using letters and other materials that have never before appeared in English—including Janáček's correspondence with Brod and with other contemporaries such as Mahler, Capek and Klemperer—Susskind traces this important relationship that nurtured Janáček's creative growth. **£19.95**

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proposal; and this certainly reflects the remoteness of British sympathies from the Continentals' federalist aspirations.

The British, then as now, wrote off such aspirations as idealist. Yet their reaction to the next product of these eager hopes, the project for the European Economic Community, was itself quite unrealistic. The "well-oiled" Whitehall machine undertook laborious operations to devise and sell the idea of encompassing the EEC in a free trade area, which Roll considers "never had much chance of success" and which he describes as "an unrealistic search for the best of all possible worlds." How could it be the best of all worlds if it never had much chance of success? The answer must be that it was the best world from the perspectives of Whitehall, even if not from those of the French farmer and the French government, which had the power to ditch the scheme and finally did so.

Some four years later Macmillan's government, having digested this rebuff, opened negotiations to join the European Community, and Roll was appointed deputy leader of the British delegation at official level. He conveys the sense of the enormous task that Macmillan and a few Ministers and Civil Servants accomplished in turning round the politicians, the Civil Service, the Commonwealth, the partners in the European Free Trade Association, and eventually the British public. The negotiations in Brussels were an equally stupendous task, at which the British delegation ground away for a year and a quarter until de Gaulle, bolstered by a successful election, broke them off in January 1963.

Olivier Wormser, then a senior official at the Quai d'Orsay, told Roll that Britain had been very close to success; and Roll speculates whether the British could have secured agreement in the summer of 1962 if they had been less slow: there was a "gradual—too gradual—realisation in London of the significance of what was happening on the Continent." They "had to fight on a vast range of specific items, many of them quite trivial": another case of "the best of all possible worlds" being sought in an idiosyncratic Westminster or Whitehall perspective. The delegation had to report to London after each negotiating session, giving what Roll calls "a sort of 'Whitehall exercise' illusion." The British were still (are still?) too Whitehallcentric to attach the sort of weight to the approach to our partners that would have given negotiations their best chance of success.

ROLL WAS A PROFESSOR by 27, a pillar of the OEEC by 40, then deputy leader of one of the most important negotiations of our age. He wrote a standard *History of Economic Thought*, and he is now the Chairman of Warburg's. Such success would hardly be possible without unusual ability; unusual civility also helps. All hairs are in place; all *mots* are *justes*; even slightly impolite words are hardly ever said. His vast range of friends has included T. S. Eliot, Hugh Gaitskell, John Kenneth Galbraith, Marjolin, Plowden, Warburg. Early successes were social as well as academic; he mixed in theatrical circles and even won a ballroom dancing competition.

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Unusual adaptability was also significant. "The problem of adapting myself to the new environment did not last long." This refers to Roll's re-entry into the Ministry of Agriculture after work in an international organisation; but it could equally have applied to his first entry into England from Central Europe at the age of nearly eighteen, to study at the University of Birmingham. The proof of the adaptation lies in the rapid and continued success. One of the few problems he seems to have encountered in adapting to foreign ways was the eradication from his French pronunciation of "a rather liquid t", imbibed from a White Russian from whom he had learnt the language. One can see how useful his languages and adaptability must have been to a British Civil Service pitchforked into a world where dealings with foreigners had suddenly become an important part of the work.

More interesting than the reasons why the British singled Roll out for a successful career—or more precisely three successful careers—are the reasons why Roll chose the British as his compatriots. His parents provided the initial impulse. He had grown up in a "liberal atmosphere, political and cultural", and it is pleasant to suppose that his parents, who generated this atmosphere, felt that in Britain he would get more of the same. But it was he who decided to become a British citizen, and to keep Britain as his home on at least two occasions when attractive opportunities were presented to live permanently elsewhere.

One of the British attractions may have been stability. If your childhood impressions include evacuation over the mountains away from the war which is burning your village the sight of soldiers looting on, the collapse of the monarchy, and a German inflation when the afternoon's prices are several times those of the morning, Birmingham and Hull may well have their points. At least they keep the same names from one year to the next, while the capital of the province where Roll was born started with one name under the Austrians, changed to another under the Romanians, and now has a third under the Russians.

Moderation and ability to compromise are (or, perhaps more accurately, were) British characteristics that seem to have suited Roll's temperament. He is not keen on the "extreme flights of Hayekian or Friedmanite fancy" and he refers with a rare touch of asperity to "the more extreme doctrinaire schools, distinguished not only by the narrowness of their beliefs but also by the arrogance with which they hold them." The merit of Keynes was to have made possible "practical enquiry, case by case and with due regard to actual circumstances, whether this or that action by the state would lead to more advantageous results than its avoidance." "A fairly eclectic policy . . . is inevitable" and "stubborn facts will force even the most doctrinaire government into a series of compromises."

Akin to this is a preference for the practical or pragmatic over the theoretical. His thesis was on the Boulton-Watt partnership for making and selling steam-engines between 1775 and 1800. Birmingham or even London seems more suitable than Paris for such concerns. The limits within which he believes economics can be relied upon to guide policy are "very narrow indeed." Surely Britain must be the country for you if you are going to be able to say such moderate, pragmatic

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and reassuring things as that the relationship between leaders of the Bank of England, the Treasury and the Government, "even if not consistently harmonious, will provide an adequate framework for carrying on."

ALTHOUGH ROLL AND AUSTRIA parted company well over half a century ago, he still finds many Austrian attributes admirable: Vienna's remarkable contribution to civilisation; the 68 years of stability during Franz Josef's reign, which held together peacefully an "extraordinary mixture of peoples and languages"; the ability to compromise (combined with tenacity) and readiness to bow before the storm (combined with examples of great heroism); the administrative talent combined with a tendency to muddle through.

Even if there is no identical match between Austria and Britain (the British not exactly at home with multilingualism and not much inclined to bow), compromise, pragmatism and, for pre-1914 Austria, stability are significant common ground between the Austria Roll still admires and the Britain to which he has been attracted; and this prompts the question whether this may be reflected in any parallels between the two countries' experiences. Austria's experience in relation to Germany in the 19th century and Britain's in relation to Europe in the 20th may offer a positive answer.

In the early 19th century Austria was the foremost power in the German-speaking world, with important external responsibilities. After the end of the War in 1814, Austria wanted only a loose confederation among the German states, with little cooperation in the fields of economics or welfare. Other Germans wanted such cooperation and Metternich saw the danger of isolation should Austria fail to act; but Austria blocked moves towards economic union, and any Austrian efforts at cooperation were too little and too late.

Prussia, on the contrary, wanted to build a German bloc, saw that the South Germans wanted a larger market and had more federalist ideas, and responded to their wishes with a customs union, then a monetary union (fixed parities and a parallel currency), leading eventually to the federation of the whole of non-Austrian Germany in 1871.

The similarities with Britain after 1945 are seductive. The British emerged from the War as the first power in Europe, also with external responsibilities. They clove to Churchill's concept of Britain at the centre of three intersecting circles, one being Europe and the other two the US and the Commonwealth. As Roll observes, as a description this was accurate enough. But it grew from a description into a belief in Britain's ability "to go on balancing these interests successfully", which was going to be far beyond our real capacity. Thus Britain was, as Austria had been, unrealistic about the development of power relations and correspondingly insensitive to its partner-countries' perceptions of their needs. Complacency and slowness were the consequences of such unrealistic egocentricity.

Fortunately the differences are also significant. France is not Prussia, nor is West Germany. De Gaulle was not Bismarck, let alone Adenauer. Britain was not led by Metternich and did in fact join the European Community. But did the British hope they had joined a train that had stopped indefinitely in a station? What would they do if the train started to move rapidly again? Some of Roll's views, which probably represent prevalent British opinions, are not too encouraging. While the European Community is on balance of advantage to us, it has an "overgrown bureaucracy"; and de Gaulle, rather than Monnet, may have "had the correct view on how progress on European unity could be achieved." But if a civil service smaller than that of a London borough is too big for Western Europe's common concerns, one's idea of the scope of those common concerns must be quite limited; and if de Gaulle had the right idea about European unity, then all thoughts of enhancing efficiency through majority votes and democracy through developing the European Parliament would have to be abandoned.

So what will happen to Britain if it is in the direction of extending competences and strengthening institutions that the Community starts to move?

AFTER BEING SEPARATED from this train by de Gaulle's veto over two decades ago, Roll's career took a happy turning. Admittedly Britain's establishment summoned him again with its 20th-century war-cry of "once more onto the barbed wire, dear friends, once more" and installed him as Permanent Secretary of George Brown's Department of Economic Affairs to look after incomes policy and the National Plan. But he picked himself off the wire and made his way to the City, where he has been a huge success as Chairman of Warburg's merchant bank. He regales us with a distinguished description of how the City works. One sidelight on this working is that Roll was able to renew his acquaintance, in conversation with colleagues, with German literature and classic Viennese jokes. Does this help to explain why merchant banks are an outstandingly successful sector in a generally unsuccessful economy? Perish the unpatriotic thought. Stability, compromise and pragmatism are valuable for such work, and the natives as well as the Viennese seem to use them in the City to good effect. A point is scored in favour of immigration, nevertheless.

What about a happy ending for Britain in Europe, as well as for Roll in the City? Britain's European policy has not yet become "an adequate framework for carrying on." The deep reason may be that in this case stability, compromise and

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pragmatism are not enough, but the creative drive of the likes of Acheson and Monnet is still required, because the Community requires further development in order to satisfy the needs of its member countries, including Britain, and cannot be developed without these more thrusting qualities. Roll observes of the City's "Big Bang" of institutional reform that "deep-rooted British institutions (often) take a long time to change, but when they do, they do it with a vengeance." Let us hope that if the City can do it, Britain's European policy also can—and that it will not be left too late.

From the Far Side of the World

Katherine Mansfield—By GILLIAN TINDALL

"I DO HOPE to God", wrote Katherine Mansfield to Middleton Murry towards the end of her life, "that people don't suffer quite as I think they do: it's not to be borne if they do."

As a pointer to her stories,[1] their quality and their basic, recurrent theme of the individual alone trying to cope with stress and pain, this remark has considerable force. As a pointer to her personality it touches one, making one feel that here indeed was a person of great integrity and capacity for caring. And this would be true—as far as it goes. But it does not go far enough to cover even the most pronounced characteristics of the complex person who was Katherine Mansfield; and, when you come to reflect upon it, it is a double-edged remark in any case. Apparently sympathetic and outgoing, acutely sensitive, it betrays also that self-centredness and set-apartness which is so often part of the writer's temperament.

Katherine Mansfield wanted to reach into other people's hearts and grasp their separate realities, but at the same time she did not know—could not know—what it was like to be an ordinary person with only her life as a vehicle for self-expression. The self which made her capable of the remark, and of such stories as "Bliss" and "The Daughters of the Late Colonel", was also the self who pursued yearningly discontented daydreams, who made herself thoroughly unpleasant as a young girl at home in New Zealand and even more unpleasant in the prime of life to her devoted doormat of an admirer, Ida Baker ("LM"). It was also this self who married, when young, a well-intentioned man whom she immediately left, who terminated several pregnancies—and who lived with and finally married the cold-blooded and exploitative Middleton Murry and suffered much in the process. She was friends with D. H. Lawrence (who behaved to her eventually with his customary vindictiveness); she helped Murry finance one of his literary journals; she found it difficult to get many of her stories published in her twenties and, near the end of her life, enjoyed a popular success as a magazine writer which in fact did her reputation no good. She clung to life, but died of TB at thirty-four, away from Murry, in a retreat in France devoted to the teaching of Gurdjieff. When the news of her death came, Virginia Woolf, who recognised her quality, however unwillingly, made a shamefaced remark in her own journal to the effect that there at least was one rival gone. . . .

As a CV it is not exactly reassuring; one feels glad, rather than otherwise, that she was spared further vicissitudes. But these outline facts are important if one is to appreciate and to evaluate at its own level Middleton Murry's encomium, pronounced in his introduction to her *Journals* after her death:

> "It is . . . impossible for one who knew her intimately, who (in a sense) worked with her during the greater part of her career as a writer, who copied and punctuated and criticised her stories as they were written, to be silent on one element in her nature which, it seems to me, was essential to a peculiar quality of her work I can only describe as a kind of *purity*. It is as though the glass through which she looked upon life were crystal-clear. And this quality of her work corresponds to a quality in her life. Katherine Mansfield was spontaneous as was no other human being I have ever met. . . ."

And he goes on to describe her life in sentimentally idealised terms.

Yet one knows what he means. There is a stripped quality about much of her writing, a ferocious honesty. If many of her stories seem less remarkable or unusual today than they did when they first appeared, that is not so much her fault as her achievement: like other innovative writers, she no longer seems as original to us as she did to her first readers simply because (to paraphrase T. S. Eliot) we know more than they did and *she* is what we know. Writing not many years after the Great Victorian Novelists, she was a pioneer of modern sensibility, the short story as a vehicle for the anguished private truth. Since then, many others have followed down the path she traced: Elizabeth Bowen, V. S. Pritchett, William Trevor, Doris Lessing. . . . For one who, in her short life, actively caused things to happen to herself (had she not had this capacity, she would have stayed in her native New Zealand and married some suitable man met at a Government House ball), her stories are crowded with people who suffer because they lack confidence and are impotent to help themselves.

[1] *The Stories of Katherine Mansfield*. Definitive Edition. Edited by ANTONY ALPERS. Oxford University Press, £17.50.

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IT IS A MARKEDLY Victorian theme to find so present in the work of someone whose own life and perceptions seem to belong firmly to the 20th century, but it is a fact: helpless women, uncaring men, the poor and the outcast are plentiful in her work. A curious dislocation is therefore often apparent between the way her characters perceive the world and the way their creator does. In her sappy, eager youth, when she had come to London to "be a writer", Katherine Mansfield wrote to a woman friend: "Would you not like to try all sorts of lives? One is so very small." Certainly, this imaginative, empathetic desire was a mainspring of her creativity, but it must also be said that such a conscious approach to life's variety is in itself a little distancing and alienating. It is not just 20th-century Katherine viewing lives largely locked in a residually 19th-century framework, but a congenital outsider gazing from outside the glass into a series of other people's rooms. At times, particularly when young, she consciously entered one or other of these "private rooms" and impersonated the occupants, with varying degrees of success and failure; but an impersonation is what it was, even to the Gurdjieffian last. The cultural transplantation from her place of origin was something she put to good use but could not, apparently, at another level, get over.

An early and compelling story, "The Tiredness of Rosabel", may stand as a prototype, containing as it does all the basic elements of the "typical" Katherine Mansfield story. The theme—the poor little shopgirl getting a glimpse of a more golden life—is traditional; its treatment is full of economy and flexibility. Unsophisticated as the ideas contained in it may be (Katherine Mansfield wrote it when she returned to Wellington after being at school in England), there is nothing unsophisticated about the technique of interweaving reality and fantasy, present moments, recent past ones, and imagined ones. There is also hardly a word wasted. She begins:

> "At the corner of Oxford Circus Rosabel bought a bunch of violets, and that was practically the reason why she had so little tea—for a scone and a boiled egg and a cup of cocoa at Lyons are not ample sufficiency after a hard day's work in a millinery establishment."

In those few lines we are told, with deceptive incidentalness, not only that Rosabel is a poorly paid assistant in a luxury West End shop, but that she lives on her own without a family to support her either financially or emotionally. She is both the *midinette* of a long-standing literary tradition and the independent woman of the emerging world into which her author was also emerging.

The man who appears briefly in Rosabel's showroom, accompanying a hat-buying lady, becomes a focus for Rosabel's daydream of a better life, but in himself he is the brutal male principle, threatening and indeed degrading: he seizes a moment when the lady is out of earshot, and he is counting money into Rosabel's hand, to say with "a slight tinge of insolence, of familiarity . . . 'You've got such a dammed pretty little figure.'" Yet out of this unpromising material Rosabel, with "that tragic optimism which is all too often the only inheritance of youth", concocts an imaginary world of being in the lady's place.

When she wrote this, Katherine Mansfield was still sufficiently inexperienced and unsure of herself to rely on pushing her point home with a sententious remark. Half a dozen years later, when the same brutal and duplicitous male principle appears in "The Little Governess", her touch is surer: the reader foresees that, given the circumstances—the difficult solo journey abroad, the chance encounter in a railway carriage—Something Bad is due to happen, but not till near the end does the kind old gentleman reveal his sexual fangs and the Little Governess find herself entrapped in a classic nightmare: she is fleeing her predator in a foreign city, and the female employer who should have provided her with a respectable haven has been told she has gone off with A Man.

MUCH MORE COVERT—indeed in the nasty surprise category—is the bad male in "Bliss", a story of considerable intensity and mastery which was published in 1917 at the height of Katherine Mansfield's powers. The story is about conscious happiness and a young wife's epicurean enjoyment of her baby, her table decorations, her friends, her garden. In the course of a successful dinner party she suddenly feels passionate desire for her husband for the first time—so that, one decides, is where the story has been leading. But within another paragraph or two we realise—and so does she—that the apparently phlegmatic husband is in fact conducting an affair with one of the guests.

Other evocations of crassly selfish male figures seem to exist for their own sake: "Mr Reginald Peacock's Day" comes to mind, and the early "A Birthday", one of those stories that derives from the author's travels in Germany; but we should not make the mistake (a fashionable one today) of coopting Katherine Mansfield too firmly into the feminist league. Callous women also appear in her pages, notably in "Mr and Mrs Dove" and in the superb if grotesque social comedy of "Marriage à la Mode." In this story a solid, well-intentioned husband is finding himself progressively pushed out of his own home by his wife's arty new friends—a 1921 tale which, though it does not actually mention the recent War, is unmistakably and searingly "post-War" in its assumptions

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and implications. Helpless in a world that he does not really understand, the husband has brought home some fruit as a present for the children whom he sees so little, but he is met even at the station by the entourage of friends:

> "'Look here', said William, 'how are we going to sit? I'd better get up by the driver.'
>
> 'No, Bobby Kane's by the driver', said Isabel. 'You're to sit between Moira and me.' The taxi started. 'What have you got in those mysterious parcels?'
>
> 'De-cap-it-ated heads!' said Bill Hunt, shuddering beneath his hat.
>
> 'Oh, fruit!' Isabel sounded very pleased. 'Wise William! A melon and a pineapple. How too nice!'
>
> 'No, wait a bit', said William, smiling. But he really was anxious. 'I brought them down for the kiddies.'
>
> 'Oh, my dear!' Isabel laughed, and slipped her hand through his arm. 'They'd be rolling in agonies if they were to eat them. No'—she patted his hand—'you must bring them something next time. I refuse to part with my pineapple.'
>
> 'Cruel Isabel! Do let me smell it!' said Moira. She flung her arms across William appealingly. 'Oh!' The strawberry bonnet fell forward: she sounded quite faint.
>
> 'A Lady in Love with a Pineapple', said Dennis, as the taxi drew up before a little shop with a striped blind. Out came Bobby Kane, his arms full of little packets.
>
> 'I do hope they'll be good. I've chosen them because of the colours. There are some round things which really look too divine. And just look at this nougat', he cried ecstatically, 'just look at it! It's a perfect little ballet!'"

And so on, agonisingly, for the whole weekend.

In the final analysis, however, it is not so much people who are cruel in Katherine Mansfield's stories as life itself: some of her most memorable and lonely central figures, Ma Parker, The Lady's Maid and the old woman in the last story of all, "The Canary", are victims less of others or of themselves than of circumstances. If these poignant evocations do not work quite as well as some of the more complex and mind-stretching stories, that is mainly because Katherine Mansfield's facility for impersonating different voices and class tones was almost too adept for her own good: the result is a fine pastiche, a virtuoso performance, with attention inevitably directed to the surface rather than to any possible depths. (As if to underline this trait in her work, Antony Alpers has included in this slightly idiosyncratic and not-quite-definitive edition two of her delectable parodies of other writers. The H. G. Wells one contains the refrain, "So we stowed Biology, and got to business."!)

A FAR MORE COMPLEX and subtle evocation of individuals awash in society is the almost surrealist "Je Ne Parle Pas Français", based on the character of Francis Carco: it is a story that recalls a less-than-happy trip Katherine Mansfield made to Paris, and the author herself thought highly of it. But, excellent though it is, it does by its very theme—expatriate, rootless persons coming to grief—

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validate a criticism of the Mansfield stories made by another eminent practitioner, V. S. Pritchett. Referring to the standard but in some ways mistaken view that Katherine Mansfield's sensibility resembles Chekhov's, Pritchett remarks that, unlike Chekhov's, the Mansfield stories are weak on "the sense of a country, a place; the sense of the unseen characters, the anonymous people, what we may call 'the others'. . . . There is no silent character in the background."

He is right in the main, but it is rather like complaining because grass is green. One of Katherine Mansfield's basic themes is that of persons either wrenched from their normal surroundings or too locked within themselves to interact fully with such society as is there, or sometimes occupying a landscape which is physically rather empty—like, indeed, that of New Zealand. I do not think, however, one can convict her of any lack of a sense of *place* in the generally accepted use of that term. A late example, "A Married Man's Story", which combines to odd effect Victorian melodrama and modern alienation, has in its second paragraph a wonderful evocation of rain, both present and remembered, particular and universal:

> ". . . And all at one and the same moment I am arriving in a strange city . . . . I am conscious of tall houses, their doors and shutters sealed against the night, of dripping balconies and sodden flower-pots. I am brushing through deserted gardens and peering into moist-smelling summer houses (you know how soft and almost crumbling the wood of a summer house is in the rain). I am standing on the dark quayside, giving my ticket into the wet red hand of an old sailor in an oilskin—How strong the sea smells! How loudly those tied up boats knock against one another! I am crossing the wet stackyard, hooded in an old sack, carrying a lantern, while the house dog, like a soaking doormat, springs, shakes himself over me. And now I am walking along a deserted road—it is impossible to miss the puddles and the trees are stirring—stirring. . . ."

How present New Zealand seems in this passage! But in contrast—and for the same reason—in the minority of stories which are set firmly in a moneyed, bourgeois social milieu there seems to be something missing, something that, to an English reader, does not quite fit. It was years after I had first read "The Garden Party" that I realised it was set—albeit vaguely—on the far side of the world. Its impact would be clearer if it were placed unequivocally in Surrey.

ANTONY ALPERS HAS DEVOTED many years to Katherine Mansfield: his biography of her exists in both an original edition and a revised one, and he explains in his Preface to the present collection that it is the result of a long-term desire on his part to create "a 'satisfactory' edition of her work, such as would enable anyone to see quite clearly what she did, and how." Satisfactory it is, with exhaustively informative notes, but Alpers goes on to add, "It does not attempt to be complete, for reasons that will appear in a moment; to be correct and comprehensive is a more appropriate aim." Maybe, but in that case should the phrase "Definitive

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Edition" be used? His reasons turn out to be largely to do with his own selection and preferences, and I suspect that the key sentence is the one where he admits that, had he included everything, two volumes would have been required. Oxford University Press might like to comment—or is comment superfluous? This volume is already at a "library edition" price in OUP's now-usual way.

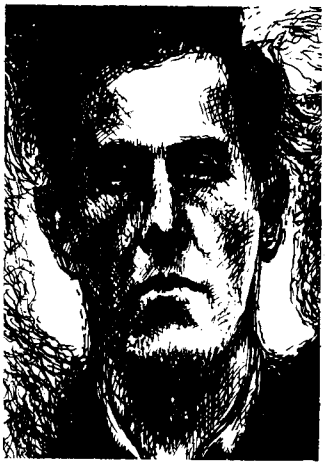
One of Alpers' omissions, and the one I most regret, is a story called "The House", which he characterised in *Katherine Mansfield* (1954) as "an early failure." Perhaps it might be a service to him, as well as to the general understanding of the interrelation between Katherine Mansfield's life and work, to quote here what he wrote about it, for he adds that it is "full of private significance related to the moment of its composition":

> "It describes the agonising dream of a worn-out, timid office girl (another Rosabel), who takes shelter from an autumn storm on the porch of an empty house and, falling asleep there, dreams of a perfect marriage, in that house, with a cheerful husband and a baby boy, log fires and toasted buns and every other comfort. The agony of the dream is her fear of learning that her baby is unreal, and the dream is ended by a voice from the past—a man, who calls to her from the door. She rushes down to stop him, and the door bangs behind her. She is dead."

I would say, rather, that the bones of this tale are those of her life's story. It is a fascinating glimpse of the way the writer's relationship with his or her work is often not merely reflective but also prophetic—the way, indeed, in which what seem retrospectively to have been the salient facts of an entire life may be compressed into some fugitive, "unimportant" piece of writing. You can conceal anything—but not in fiction.

Ayer's Wittgenstein

20th-Century Philosophy—By Alan Ryan



The first philosopher I actually saw in the flesh was, I think, Richard Wollheim; it must have been about 1957, when he came to talk to our sixth form about Marx. But what I remember of the talk is the fact that he was wearing shocking pink socks—a somewhat daring dark blue suit (rolled outside seams on the trousers hovered on the edge of respectability), pale blue shirt, and pointed-toed shoes provided an admirable foil to this ankle-level surprise. It offered a glimpse of an adult world in which the intellectual and sartorial tyranny of schoolmasters was no more than a bad memory. Like Hobbes, struck all of a heap by the discovery of Euclid in "a gentleman's library" and in love with geometry from that moment on, I saw at once that sex and drugs and rock and roll could be renounced; happiness was spelled epistemology.

The effect might have worn off if I hadn't gone to a seminar given by the Wykeham Professor of Logic during my first term in Oxford; I made some objection to the professor's account of sense data, and was rewarded by a moment of pure bliss—"That's a very good point", observed Ayer to the rest of the room, "that man in the red sweater has made a very good point." The kindness to beginners which he displayed then, he displayed as a colleague a good many years later, and to an enormous number of other students before and since. Their kindliness is the most striking feature of the two volumes of Ayer's autobiography, *Part of My Life* (1977) and *More of My Life* (1984). The first volume paints a rather horrible picture of the snobbery and anti-Semitism which Ayer encountered at Christ Church, and yet he writes kindly of the place and seems surprised when reminded that he'd gone off to the War swearing that he'd come back and bump off half the Senior Common Room. In the second volume, he responds to the urging of all the reviewers who complained that he'd been cagey about his numerous girl-friends, and spills the beans without embarrassment—and the amazing thing is that everyone is treated with the same generosity and the same affection. Philosophy being a professional discipline, Ayer is not at all kind to philosophical incompetence; he's quite clear what is good philosophy and what is not—he's not in the least a trimmer in philosophical matters. But it remains a question of professional competence; no very great passion threatens his balance.

This has its drawbacks. It means that both as an autobiographer and as the chronicler of other men's thoughts, he is not very flexible, not obsessed with seeking out the inwardness of another man's view of the world. It sometimes doesn't matter; where the natural sympathy is great enough, as it is with Russell or with Pierce and James, Ayer's own analytical approach picks up the cast of mind of his subject. But Wittgenstein is perhaps the least likely figure for him to tackle successfully; they are intellectual and temperamental antipodes, and were it not that Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* was the charter of the logical-positivist movement to which the impetuous pre-War Ayer belonged, you'd no more expect Ayer to write about Wittgenstein than about Schlegel or Schelling.

This is not to say that *Wittgenstein*[1] is a bad book; it is a very good book. It does at least part of what Ayer sets out to

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do—which is to render Wittgenstein intelligible to the amateur—and it has the virtues of all Ayer's work; it is as clear as the subject allows, it is concise, crisp, and yet unhurried. It is an exceedingly elegant book—not for nothing is Ayer a fan of Voltaire. And it is a very good-natured book. It ends with the judgment that Wittgenstein was a great philosopher, probably second only to Bertrand Russell among 20th-century philosophers. The tone becomes mildly irritated only when discussing Wittgenstein's view of magic and religion, and there is nothing worse than a faint snort of amusement in Ayer's voice when he records the efforts of Wittgenstein's disciples in publishing some twenty books constructed out of his notes in the three decades since his death. But it would I think, be very hard for the reader of Ayer's *Wittgenstein* to see why Ayer thinks so highly of him; almost nothing that Wittgenstein wrote after the *Tractatus* gets very high marks from Ayer; almost all Wittgenstein's most characteristic claims are rejected.

It is worse than that, though. The point about Wittgenstein is that he was in some sense—a sense which remains opaque to me—an anti-philosopher. His later work, of which the first part of his *Philosophical Investigations* is both the easiest-going, and the nearest thing we have to the statement he would have wished to publish, offers itself as a sort of therapy, an antidote to the "bewitchment" which language has worked upon us. There is, if we take Wittgenstein seriously, no *doctrine* in *Philosophical Investigations*, and strictly speaking no argument either. There are, instead, what Wittgenstein thought of as "reminders"; in so far as it makes sense to talk of philosophical method at all, the method of the *Investigations* is descriptive—when the philosopher, searching for a way to fight off the sceptic who says that we "know nothing", turns and says "I know at least that *this* is a pain", Wittgenstein assembles reminders of what is already familiar—the fact that we never use such expressions in everyday life. Far from indicating occasions when our knowledge is cast iron, they show that there is something fishy about the philosopher's quest and the sceptic's doubts.

If Wittgenstein was so hostile to the whole enterprise of philosophy as traditionally understood, one might think that the interpreter's task was above all else to explain how he came to feel that hostility and what it was that he was doing if it wasn't philosophy. As Ayer observes, the *Investigations* seem at any rate to be a strikingly philosophical way of subverting philosophy. If the aim is to "show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle"—in Wittgenstein's well-known phrase—it looks as if the fly can only be got out by a philosopher. Wittgenstein was no doubt extremely conscious of just this point; but he does nothing at all to resolve or dissolve the seeming contradiction between profession and practice. It is not at all easy to see what sort of account of Wittgenstein would meet the case, precisely because it is such a glaring contradiction and Wittgenstein was so disinclined to explain himself. The way in which the philosophical profession has coped with the problem is by ignoring it. The *Investigations* is

[1] *Wittgenstein*. By A. J. Ayer. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £12.95.

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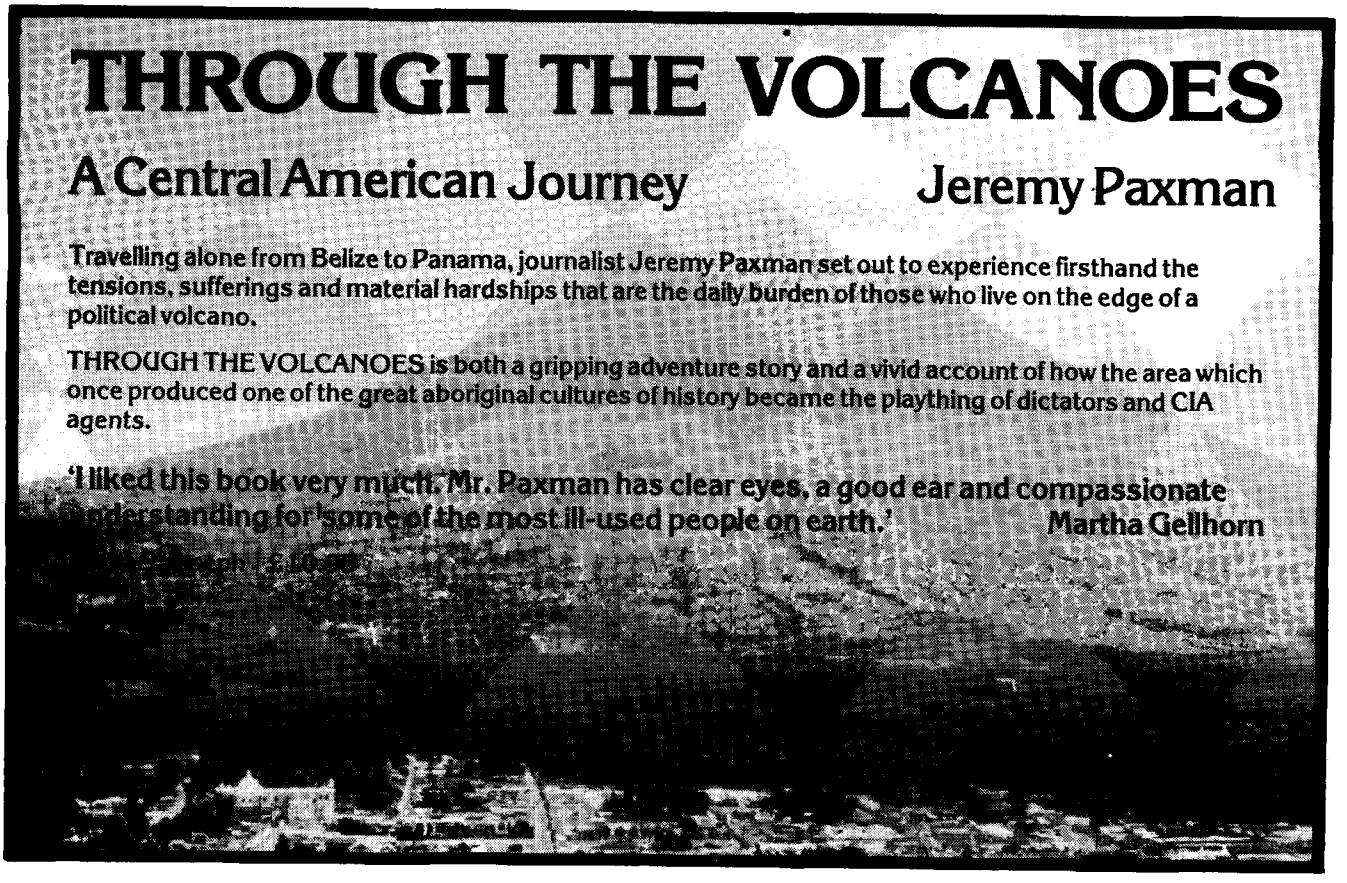
treated as just what Wittgenstein said it wasn't, as a set of doctrines. It contains, on this view, some intriguing ideas about the nature of knowledge and scepticism, about the analysis of meaning, about the relationship between what *I mean by* what I say and what what I say *means*. Treated this way, the *Investigations* yields very great riches; perhaps the richest of its treasures is what it implies for the possibility of a "natural science of man." As Wittgenstein observes, psychologists hankering after a causal account of belief, desire, and action have longed for the arrival of "the Newton of the human sciences." But in his view, they've been waiting on the wrong platform, for there simply cannot be causal laws governing human action. This has striking implications for the social sciences. They cannot aspire to the same predictive success as the natural sciences; but they can do what the natural sciences cannot, namely give us an "insider's" view of the lives of other societies.

AYER FOLLOWS professional practice—ideas are treated chronologically, after a chapter on Wittgenstein's biography. His disjointed life first took him from Vienna to Manchester as an engineer, then to Cambridge as a logician, into the Austrian army (where he took the notes for the *Tractatus* into battle with him) and an Italian prisoner-of-war camp. Between the Wars he gave away the wealth he had inherited—to his siblings, on the grounds that they were rich enough not to be corrupted by it—and became a schoolmaster in a village school. Dismissed after a row with the parents, he went back to Cambridge, collected a Ph.D. for the *Tractatus* (of which Moore said that he did not understand it, but perceived that it was a work of genius and therefore deserving of a Ph.D. at any rate), and became a research fellow at Trinity. It was in the 1930s that he renounced the analytical techniques of the *Tractatus* and in lectures and classes started to explain the ideas which appeared in the *Investigations* (and, years later, in books published from the notes of those who went to his classes at that time). In the Second World War he worked as a hospital porter. Afterwards he returned to the chair to which he had been elected in 1939, but resigned it in 1947. He led a semi-nomadic existence after that—sometimes living in Ireland, making occasional forays to Austria and America—and returned to Cambridge just before his death in April 1951.

Ayer mentions the way Wittgenstein dominated his disciples—and disciples is the word, for he tolerated no other attitude—and the brutality and harshness of his methods of argument. It took very little to incur his wrath and the thundering judgment that "You have understood nothing of what I'm saying, *nothing*!" On the other hand, he was harder on himself than on anyone else, and undoubtedly felt that he and the age he lived in were both irredeemably corrupt. He detested what he thought of as cleverness, and evidently aspired after a kind of philosophical wisdom whose pursuit is, on the one hand, unfashionable and, on the other, declared to be impossible in his own early writings. When the *Tractatus* announces "then there is the unsayable", it seems that this is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not meant in the logical-positivist spirit of—"that's all strictly meaningless." It is a gesture towards something entirely reputable, but not literally sayable.

As I have suggested, Ayer doesn't concentrate on the way Wittgenstein's hold on the imagination of philosophers stems from this strenuously maintained internal contradiction in his life and work. Ayer takes the reader steadily through the more sayable parts of the story. There's a good clear account of the *Tractatus* which conveys very well the analytical urge to discover the basic, simple components out of which the world—or our understanding of it—must be constructed. This is terrain which suits Ayer particularly well, for he himself has never wavered in the conviction that the task of philosophy is analysis.

Thereafter, we pursue the trail through the subjects for which Wittgenstein is famous, especially through the apparent claim that we do not have *knowledge* of our own internal states. Ayer readily agrees that such locutions as "I know that this is a pain" or "I know that I am in pain" are odd. What he will not agree is that they are senseless. Wittgenstein in effect spends his time pointing out how very differently we would behave if challenged to *show* that what we've got is a pain from the way we'd behave if challenged to show that what we've got in our hand is a coin. We can't do the equivalent of opening our hand and revealing its contents. All we can do is tell a story about the outside world—"Can't you hear me yelling . . . do you think I'm doing this for fun?"—from which it has often been inferred that Wittgenstein is some kind of behaviourist, or that he denied the reality of "inner states", or that he maintained a fiercely verificationist view about knowledge.

AYER STEADILY UNRAVELS the issues involved. If it is true that phrases like "I know I am in pain" are deviant, there can be deviant occasions when we need them. (You wake up hearing someone groan, think that someone must be in pain, and realise as you become conscious that it's you—"I knew someone was in pain . . . now I know I am in pain", you say.) So Wittgenstein can't be right in saying that we don't know that we're in pain; on the other hand, it doesn't appear that he was trying to give a behaviourist account of what pain consists of, nor that he was trying to deny the reality of inner states. What he certainly was doing, and what Ayer resists the whole way through, was to cast doubt on the assumption that philosophical analysis takes us back to the individual's experience and then forward again to the common world individuals construct on the basis of their experience.

In the end, *Wittgenstein* is perhaps most interesting not so much for what it says about Wittgenstein as for what it shows about two conflicting styles of philosophical thought. On the one hand there is Wittgenstein trying to get us to accept that "This is what we do", quelling our urge to look for further warrants for doing it. On the other hand, there is the restless Ayer, refusing to admit that the search for foundations is a dead end. If the general reader will still find Wittgenstein an enigma after this introduction, he ought to get a pretty good sense of what philosophy in the 20th century has been about.

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AUTHORS

Eva Tucker has published two novels, *Contact* and *Drowning* (Calder & Boyars, 1966, 1969), and is the translator of Joseph Roth's *Radetzkymarch*. During 1983 and 1984 she spent several months in Lagos, and was there during the military coup of 1 January 1984.

Jeffrey Richards, Senior Lecturer in History at Lancaster University, is the author of *Age of the Dream Palace: Cinema and Society in Britain 1930-1939* (Routledge, 1984); his study of British cinema in World War II, *Britain Can Take It*, is to be published later this year.

John Mole's latest book of poems is *In and Out of the Apple* (Secker & Warburg, 1984).

Liu Yung, *fl.* 1034, was one of the major *tz'u* poets of Northern Sung China. **Julie Landau**'s translations are from *Tz'u*, a book of Sung Dynasty translations which she is just completing. Her work has appeared in many journals and anthologies in the United States and Hong Kong, and she is a contributor to *Waiting for the Unicorn: Poems and Lyrics of China's Last Dynasty*, an anthology which Indiana University Press is to publish next summer.

Edward Pearce is a leader writer and Parliamentary sketch writer on the *Daily Telegraph*. *Hummingbirds and Hyenas*, the sequel to his *Senate of Lilliput*, has just been brought out by Faber and Faber.

Dan Jacobson's non-fiction works and novels include *The Story of the Stories: The Chosen People and its God* (Secker & Warburg, 1982) and *The Confessions of Josef Baisz* (n.e., Penguin, 1979). "The Vanishing Act" forms part of his *Time and Time Again: Autobiographies*, just published by André Deutsch.

Jean-François Revel writes a column for the Paris Journal *Le Point*. His most recently translated work, *How Democracies Perish*, came out earlier this year (Doubleday, New York, and Weidenfeld, London).

Richard Ormrod, author of *Una Troubridge: The Friend of Radclyffe Hall* (Jonathan Cape, 1984; Carroll & Graf, 1985), is currently working on a biography of Richard Church.

Michael Shepherd is Professor of Epidemiological Psychiatry at the Institute of Psychiatry, University of London. His article "The Psycho-Historians" appeared in ENCOUNTER in March 1979. His latest publication is *Sherlock Holmes and the Case of Dr Freud* (Tavistock, 1985).

John Pinder was director of the Policy Studies Institute (earlier P.E.P.) from 1964-1985; he is now a Senior Fellow of the Institute, Visiting Fellow at the London School of Economics, and Professor at the College of Europe in Bruges. His most recent work (as co-author) is *Politices for a Constrained Economy* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1983).

Gillian Tindall's biography of Rosamond Lehmann was published this year by Chatto & Windus. Her most recent work of fiction is a novel, *Looking Forward* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1983).

Alan Ryan is Reader in Politics, University of Oxford, and a Fellow of New College. He is the author of *Property and Political Theory* (Blackwell, 1984) and *J. S. Mill* (Routledge, 1975), and editor of *The Idea of Freedom: Essays in Honour of Isaiah Berlin* (Oxford University Press, 1979).

Mark Le Fanu taught English at Downing College, Cambridge, for a number of years. His essays on film have appeared in *The Cambridge Quarterly*, *Sight & Sound*, and *Positif*. His book on Tarkovsky will be published early next year by the British Film Institute.

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Books Encountered

Here Lies: An Autobiography. By ERIC AMBLER. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £10.95.

A testing title from the 76-year-old master of intrigue, and a rather oblique book. It begins with a thriller-like accident and amnesic aphasia, and ends in mid-career: but is discreetly revealing, thoughtfully learned, and characteristically quizzical.

The Fringes of Power: Downing Street Diaries 1939-1955. By JOHN COLVILLE. Hodder & Stoughton, £14.95.

Fascinating, witty, and (in wartime) illegal diary by Churchill's Private Secretary and confidant: sharper than any memoirs, it includes outspoken biographical notes. Of Lord Moran's *Winston Churchill*, Sir John confesses: "In reviewing this book, I wrote unkindly but truthfully: 'Lord Moran was never present when history was made, though he was quite often invited to luncheon afterwards.'" No such reservations here.

Rise and Fall. By MILOVAN DJILAS. Macmillan, £14.95.

The last of Djilas's four volumes of memoirs, this runs from 1946 to 1966—not, as the blurb claims, to "the present day." It ends with his abrupt release from the imprisonment occasioned by *Conversations with Stalin*, on which it interestingly enlarges.

An Egyptian Journal. By WILLIAM GOLDING. Faber, £12.95.

Testy, warps-and-all account of travelling the Nile in a hired motor-cruiser with a crew of five, illustrated chiefly by the author's photographs. These and the text bring to life an Egypt as beguiling (and vexing) as Europeans have so often found it.

Herself Defined: The Poet H.D. and her World. By BARBARA GUEST. COLLINS, £15.

A sympathetic, painstaking, not excessively critical biography of Ezra Pound's disciple and one-time fiancée, later married to Richard Aldington and lover to others, including "Bryher" (Winifred Ellerman). Long ago now, and rather far away.

Brett: From Bloomsbury to New Mexico: A Biography. By SEAN HIGNETT. Hodder & Stoughton, £14.95.

Briskly written, and a change from Bloomsburyolatry, this spices biography with amused, affectionate memories of Dorothy Brett in old age, and sheds duly harsh light on Katherine Mansfield and Middleton Murry, as well as on Lawrence and Frieda.

Monty at Close Quarters: Recollections of the Man. Compiled by T. E. B. HOWARTH. Leo Cooper in association with Secker & Warburg, £10.95.

Uncontroversial sidelights on Field-Marshal Montgomery from twelve friends and acquaintances, including (and marshalled by) the former High Master of Monty's old school. They add, but not vitally, to Nigel Hamilton's *magnum opus* in the making.

The Courtship of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett. By DANIEL KARLIN. Oxford University Press, £12.95.

Wildly revisionist Browning version, based on closer scrutiny of the letters. "It is not too much to say [of Browning] that he composes his love for her in the same terms as he composes the action of his poems." Far from devaluing the lover, this integrates lover and poet.

A Path from Rome: An Autobiography. By ANTHONY KENNY. Sidgwick & Jackson. £15.

The Master of Balliol, CND supporter, philosopher, and former priest, on his lonely childhood, his early vocation, his austere training, his painful doubts, and the dialectic which led him into the world and marriage.

August Strindberg. By OLOF LAGERCRANTZ. Translated by ANSELM HOLLO. Faber, £20.

Another tortured soul, master of domestic hells, revealed in this remorseless biography as having rearranged his own life-story, and heightened family tensions, to serve his dramatic art.

The Other Side of the Moon: The Life of David Niven. By SHERIDAN MORLEY. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £10.95.

Not *quite* so racy as its subject's own memoirs, but more accurate. It reveals love-affairs, corrects legends, and harrowingly describes Niven's terminal motor neurone disease. Enough now said?

Everything to Lose: Diaries 1945-60. By FRANCES PARTRIDGE. Victor Gollancz, £12.95.

More post-Bloomsburiana, from Ralph Partridge's widow, concluding the journal began in *A Pacifist's War* and continued in *Memories*. Homely glimpses of literary lions and kittens, from E. M. Forster, Arthur Koestler, and V. S. Pritchett to Cyril Connolly, Raymond Mortimer, and beyond.

Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear: Their Letters 1909-1914. Edited by OMAR POUND and A. WALTON LITZ. Faber, £25.

Some 200 texts, a handful from diaries, mostly hitherto unpublished, and many illuminating Pound's poems with the editors' scholarly help. A few remain trivial or enigmatic, and Dorothy Pound (as she became) probably destroyed a score or so.

Chaim Weizmann: The Making of a Zionist Leader. By JEHUDA REINHARZ. Oxford University Press, £29.50.

First of two projected volumes, in which Professor Reinharz combines exhaustive biography with comprehensive history. Immensely learned, painstaking, and reasonably impartial, it amply describes but seldom shares its subject's firecracker quality.

The Kitchener Enigma. By TREVOR ROYLE. Michael Joseph, £15.

A worthy effort, backed by family papers, to bring Kitchener to life as more than the moustachioed recruiting poster, and less than the covert homosexual sometimes alleged. Verdict? Rather a dull dog; but lonely, loyal and brave.

The Kindness of Strangers: The Life of Tennessee Williams. By DONALD SPOTO. The Bodley Head, £12.95.

Candid, harrowing, but redeeming account of a turbulent career, alternating self-doubt with exuberance, and haunted by family tragedy which no doubt spurred Williams to self-destructive addictions: drink, drugs, and homosexual promiscuity. The redemption is in what he nevertheless wrote.

Edward Thomas: A Portrait. By R. GEORGE THOMAS. Oxford University Press, £12.95.

A fittingly respectful study, improving on both Coombes (1956) and Cooke (1970), of the poet (and prolific prose writer) whom Leavis considered "exquisitely sincere and sensitive", and who here comes alive as far more troubled.

The Quest for Merlin. By NIKOLAI TOLSTOY. Hamish Hamilton, £12.95.

A treasure-hunt of a book, at length unearthing its quarry in the 6th-century Scottish Lowlands, but exploring also the ramifications of the myth which Tolstoy believes was based on a real last heir to the Druids.

Memoirs of King George II. By HORACE WALPOLE. Edited by JOHN BROOKE. Yale University Press, £65, $100.

New, sumptuous, definitive three-volume edition of the first part of what Walpole left in a sealed chest to enlighten his family and heirs. Less fun than his letters, but indispensable to historians. The George III volumes are on their way.

R.M.

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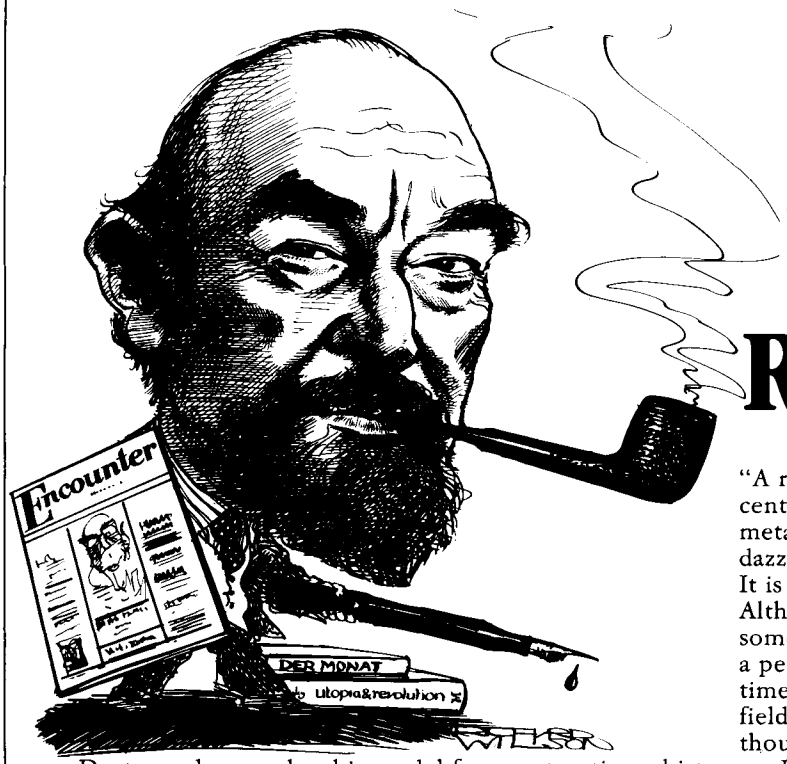

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FILM

A Russian Master

Andrei Tarkovsky

By Mark Le Fanu

Is cinema, in the West, any longer very important? It is; but one is forced to defend that conviction in the face of a culture which increasingly sees this art-form as a standard dinosaur. Cinemas, as we know, are closing; we live in "the television age." But the exigencies of the cathode tube are less than friendly to the pictorial richness which was always part of the cinema's greatness: the enormous screen, the darkened auditorium, the invitation to dream which is our past and our fortune. We were lucky as children to be open to the cinema's romance and we may hope, in turn, that enough of it survives for future generations to learn its pleasures.

In the Soviet Union and the countries of the East, and in the Third World, the issue has not yet reached crisis point. There, city-dwellers still adore "the movies", giving them a place in their lives, as the West did in the 1920s and '30s. Yet such a contrast is already contentious as far as the Soviet Union is concerned. Soviet cinema is, of course, as old as cinema itself. Its heroic age in the 1920s was responsible for many of the medium's most enduring masterpieces, and Andrei Tarkovsky—perhaps Russia's greatest contemporary film-maker—is first and foremost a descendant of Eisenstein. Like Eisenstein he has a passion for history, which he explores with intense painterly boldness. His talents are visionary and theatrical, and as far above tendentious ideological moralising as it is possible for an artist's to be.

In a career which began in 1960 Tarkovsky has made six feature-length films, all generally considered to be masterpieces: *Ivan's Childhood* (1962), *Andrei Roublev* (1966), *Solaris* (1972), *The Mirror* (1974), *The Stalker* (1979), and *Nostalgia* (1983). His "sociological position" is complex and subtly interesting. Cinema is a popular art-form, but Tarkovsky's films are—more, perhaps, than those of any other contemporary film-maker—hermetic, experimental, intellectual to the point of obscurity. One wonders how he managed to survive in the Soviet Union for as long as he did. After the filming of *Nostalgia*—a co-production between Mosfilm and the major Italian television channel RAI—he applied to the Soviet authorities for permission to extend his stay abroad for another two years in order to carry out a couple of projects (in Sweden and Britain) arising out of assignments for the staging of operas. He received no reply. He is now in Sweden, working on his latest film, *The Sacrifice*; it is not yet clear whether he regards himself as being in permanent exile.

Tarkovsky's first film, *Ivan's Childhood*—shot in a black-and-white of striking tonal contrasts—is one of his most lovely and complex works. Set in the Second World War, it opens with a sequence of a child remembering his mother; he yearns for her with passionate longing—he seems to fly through the air to greet her. (The Tarkovskian camera possesses, always, extraordinary powers of mobility.) Later in the film, a Russian officer's care for the child is like the tender regard of a father.

In themselves, stories of the War are of little importance to Tarkovsky. Their value lies in the residue of human attachment—the bonds of loyalty, courage, memory—which at any given moment such stories can muster. They define, I believe, his thoughtful and melancholy patriotism, which is as far as it is possible to be from a strident imperial chauvinism. Tarkovsky's patriotism stems, like the boy's protectiveness towards his mother, from sentiments of pity and love.

In the ebb and flow of the Russian advance through the Ukraine during the Second World War, the boy finds himself pitched into a position of command. His knowledge of the river crossings proves indispensable to the advancing battalions, conferring on him in the confusing delays of battle the status of minor guerrilla chieftain. An officer takes an interest in him, recognising his extraordinary qualities. A long time later, when the Russians finally enter Berlin, the same officer, sorting through the rifled files of the Chancery, comes upon a death certificate: the boy, captured by the Germans, has been executed along with hundreds of others. . . .

These Chancery scenes provide a useful route into what is distinctive about Tarkovsky's cinema. The capture of the ruined city of Berlin is dramatised on screen like no other military conquest I have seen. As the soldiers and tanks advance through the streets, the air becomes filled with a wash of the Chancery's documents, whirling and falling in multitudes. This "snowstorm" image has the power of an epiphany, not less so for the realisation, when it comes, that what we are witnessing is cleverly-cut documentary footage. For Tarkovsky's talent is as much as anything a talent for *finding* things. It is as if his gaze possessed some power, some integrity, that had only to alight on the photographed image to call into it a special beauty and meaning. All his films are imbued with this intensity of dreaming, yet his dreams (as such "documentary" incidents indicate) have their origin in the tragic determinants of history.

The film which followed in 1966, *Andrei Roublev*, is perhaps his best known in the West, and also the most explicitly indebted to Eisenstein. In *Alexander Nevsky* (1938) and *Ivan the Terrible* (1945-46) Eisenstein was engaged in intricate ideological manoeuvres. On the one hand, these films expose the darkness of the Middle Ages: their cruelty, superstition, unenlightenment. In the process, however, the logic of the intention collapses. The film-maker's astonishing reconstruction makes us see the very institutions of oppression as

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possessed of indescribable beauty. *Nevsky* and *Ivan* become a nostalgic lament on the variety of estates which in all their heterogeneous clamour and their teeming inequality have been stamped out by contemporary society. I don't think anyone can watch the sequence of Ivan's coronation in Moscow Cathedral, and not believe that to Eisenstein the lack of such pageant and music and magnificence constitutes an irretrievable loss.

Eisenstein's attraction to the Church's pageantry came from his ebullience and irrepressible aesthetic generosity. But his admiration was distanced, pagan, materialist. Tarkovsky's admiration, on the other hand, emanates from within. I would imagine that he is a Christian; but whether this is so or not, it is striking that his subject-matter deals not with the power of military victory, but with the pathos of defeat, and with the achievements of artists and thinkers. Roublev is a peripatetic painter of icons, and in his characterisation Tarkovsky says clearly what in Eisenstein may only be hinted at: that the salvation of mankind is more likely to be found, not in the glories of conquest and government, but in the activities of the individual hand and eye, in their concentrated appropriation of beauty.

The icon painter is accompanied by his apprentices. In the scenes of their instruction are drawn together with exemplary seriousness some of the great forgotten themes of humanist teaching. A trade was originally a mystery, and the artist passed on his craft to a pupil who had chosen him as master, freely and humbly. Surely one of the most unusual aspects of contemporary thinking about art is the curious refusal to acknowledge that there need be such a master. Tarkovsky's stern and ascetic stories return again and again to this classical relationship (he has spoken nobly about his own teacher, Mikhail Romm).

APPRENTICESHIP, THEN, has its value. But beyond it lies a knowledge about art that comes from religious conviction. At the climax of *Andrei Roublev* we are present at the casting of an enormous bell on the wild hillsides outside Vladimir. The old craftsman-bellfounder having died, the work is in the charge of his son (played by the same actor, wiry and wraithlike, who played the boy Ivan). The bell is to be cast in a trench dug in the side of a hill covered with fantastic scaffolding. The men believe the boy knows the formula for the alloy; we know that his confidence is bluff. In front of our eyes the casting of the bell becomes a metaphor for the indestructibility of the artistic impulse under the most exigent spiritual circumstances.

With its imaginative depiction of plunder, battle and savagery, *Andrei Roublev* is a most vital evocation of the Middle Ages. In England in recent decades there has sprung up a vogue among dramatists—Edward Bond and Howard Brenton are the best known—for setting their plays in a remote and barbaric period of history. But *Lear* (Edward Bond, Royal Court, 1971) and *The Romans in Britain* (Howard Brenton, National Theatre, 1981) reveal themselves as foolish and windy works, conceived in malice; they share none of the Russian film-maker's imagination and attention to physical detail. Who ever doubted that the Middle Ages were cruel? What the British playwrights seem to lack is some directed countervailing concern for the richness or mystery of life as experienced in the epoch before science. It is this that shines out in *Andrei Roublev*, in the shots of mists and flares and waters, massed bonfires glimpsed fleetingly in the forest, churches in their pride and ruin. And Tarkovsky floats over these reveries, as if in Leonardo da Vinci's flying boat, dreaming his events into existence.

TARKOVSKY TURNED TO THE FUTURE in *Solaris* (1972)—an adaptation from a science-fiction novel by the Polish author Stanislaw Lem—and his speculation about such matters raises itself above the normal level of childish guesswork and special effects by anchoring itself to the present. For great stretches of the film Tarkovsky seems quite reluctant to leave the earth. There are extraordinary scenes in the countryside *dacha* of the leading scientist, Burton, as the expedition to the planet Solaris is planned—scenes that have little to do, perhaps, with science-fiction proper, and everything to do with the smell of hay on summer afternoons, the gleam of polish on old floorboards, the need to live and work close to earth and water. These are ancestral moments snatched from a culture that in its official capacity frowns on the notion of ancestry, meditations on the past in a film about the future. Evidently Tarkovsky would have men live in the houses of their grandfathers. And where this is not possible, he would urge us (like the romantic injunctions of Thoreau or Stevenson) to choose a remote spot in the countryside and build a house of our own.

Eventually the rocket takes off, and the film, it turns out, does indeed have a science-fiction content. The expedition has been organised to investigate a strange cloud of gas known as "the Sea of Solaris." The peculiarity of this phenomenon is that it seems to be activated as much by the observation of the scientists as by its own chemical or physical properties. In particular, the mental turmoil of one of the astronauts (co-leader of the expedition and the hero of the film) buffets the "Sea" into mysterious awakenings. The meaning? Perhaps, by some logic of displacement, we are looking not into a "soup" of interstellar dust, but into the workings of the brain. Solaris is, interchangeably (depending on whether we use a telescope or a microscope), a galaxy in the starry heavens or that other, internal, galaxy of atoms out of which is constituted the human mind.

In some forcefully tangential way the film invites us to ask whether we think the universe into existence. The philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce wrote, at the end of the last century, a book called *Chance, Love and Logic* which purported to be a statistical proof of the existence of an Intelligent Being; and something of the spirit of these mathematical cogitations seems to animate Tarkovsky's fable. The hero's turmoil is his remembered love of his wife—or his mother; for someone, at any event, whom he has betrayed, and who comes back now from the mirror-land of Solaris in the shape of a "neutrino girl." Her coming-to-life, like the resurrection of the heroine of Carl Dreyer's great Christian epic *Ordet*, is the culminating event of a profound

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idiosyncratic meditation on time, memory, and survival.

After *Solaris* comes *The Mirror* (1974). *Zerkalo*, to give it its Russian name—to my mind the richest and most moving of Tarkovsky's films—is a personal and historical meditation on a child growing up under Stalinism. The film is a mosaic, weaving among scenes of childhood the reveries of more recent decades, which take the form of puzzling highly-charged documentary footage. The film-maker seems to ponder not only his own identity but also his native land's.

The powerful maternal presence of Margarita Terekhova as the boy's mother makes one think of a deftly-woven patchwork, cherished and beautiful. Memory, more captious than narrative, gets away with audacious lacunae, and some commentators have likened the film's collage to the practices of Cubist painting, citing the "prismatic effect" of a broken mirror. But to search for a governing metaphor is to risk stranding this film at the level of formalism. Mirrors—even Cubist mirrors—don't merely "break up"; and the opacity of the film, when we allow ourselves to relax into it, is belied by its representational boldness.

In this sense the cinema has taken over the domain of the painter, as if film-makers in the end had found something rebarbative and foolish about the anti-representationism of so much modern art. Tarkovsky's "eye" is radically innocent, and films like *The Mirror* constitute an effort to demonstrate that the period of purest seeing—and thus the origin of painting—lies in the candour of childhood. Modern painting, it seems to me, has lost access to this childish and mythological groundspring. In *The Mirror* the gust of wind across a field of wheat, the bonfire glimpsed blazing through the arch of a doorway, the scurrying of animals in the winter loft, all serve to recreate from the plundered imagery of childhood a genuine and utopian subject-matter in which the noble mastery of the painter's canvas can once more come into its own.[1]

The vision of the child is one matter; the vision of the adult another. *The Mirror* displays a dual perspective. In one vista there are unspoken epiphanies, at their most piercing in the time before language. In the other there is language, carrying along with it history and meaning and identity. In one of the key scenes of the film the boy in his grandmother's house comes across a volume of Pushkin's poems. He contemplates and reads aloud with passion the work of a writer influenced by Shakespeare and Goethe and Byron. Was Tarkovsky suggesting that Russia "belongs to the West"? If so, it was an extraordinary and daring affirmation. A related impetus governs a scene in which the boy picks up a book about Leonardo's paintings, pausing at the portrait of Ginevra de' Benci. And the audience pauses too—draws breath—since the book itself is so beautiful. Isn't this the kind of book the Revolution dispensed with? Are there books like this surviving still in private hands, handed down to each generation?

The whole meditation on country in *The Mirror* is dramatically complex. If Russia belongs to Europe in terms of its 19th-century culture, obviously it belongs, too, to "Asia." Russia's exoticism is present in the way Leonardo's mirror-writing is matched, in Western eyes, by the strangeness of the Cyrillic script that captions the book's illustrations. Later too there are extraordinary newsreel sequences of troops moving across the flat plans of Central Asia under an interminable sky. At the Chinese border, crowds of Red Guards wave Maoist booklets in the faces of their solid opponents. Who is who, and what is happening to national identities? We see only the guards in their fur-lined parkas, all so "asiatic" and "foreign", their broad Kalmuck features edging imperceptibly into the flat yellow faces of the "enemy."

Tarkovsky's sensibility is similar, I suggest, to the sensibility of a Chekhov or a Turgenev: a cultivated and European mind at home in the spiritual and cultural places of the West.[2] Yet, if *The Mirror* reminds one of Chekhov, *The Stalker* (1979) clearly has something of Dostoevsky, especially in its Christian pessimism. In terms of its *mise-en-scène* this film is as brilliant as the others, but for the first time in Tarkovsky's cinema the brilliance seems neurotic. Take a line of dialogue (apparently adapted from a poem by the film-maker's father): "What is soft and weak is good; hardness is closest to death." Is this simple a suggestion that we must be open to experience? But the hero's magnificent readiness becomes indistinguishable, at times, from passivity—indistinguishable almost (here Dostoevsky) from a Christian connoisseurship of suffering.

And the stalking character whom the film is about? Is his anguish motivated, or mad? Our difficulty in deciding may be due to the allegorical and abstract nature of the quest, which at the end of the journey denies the existence of a definable goal—a prey that could be adequately "netted." Still, *The Stalker* with its imagery of dank corridors, crumbling walls, subterranean rivers, moss-bedded banks of fern, is a masterpiece. The landscape appropriates the characters and the characters appropriate the landscape; even in this Slavic wilderness Tarkovsky pays a certain homage to the West. For the films that *The Stalker* most resembles are surely the early 1960s black and white masterpieces of Ingmar Bergman and Antonioni (*Persona, L'Eclisse, La Notte*); except that, with a characteristic belief in miracles, Tarkovsky manages at the last moment to extract hope, where these films had merely

[1] The prevalence of floating objects in Tarkovsky's cinema may well have to do with the loss to painting brought about by the completion in the 19th century of the long process of secularisation—and with it the disappearance from canvas of winged beings, angels or *putti*. Tarkovsky's images of floating women are in this sense a return to more traditional motifs in painting—to the ecstasy involved in believing that not only the earth is peopled, but also the air and the heavens. In this respect he resembles his countryman from Vitebsk—Chagall.

[2] His stage contributions to British colloquia on his work in Britain—in February 1982 at the National Film Theatre and in October 1983 at the Riverside Theatre, Hammersmith—have been memorable. Tarkovsky is also a fluent and intelligent writer. His meditative reflections on cinema, *Sculpting in Time*, are due to be published by the Bodley Head early in 1986.

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despair. Tarkovsky persuades his audience that even if the Stalker's child never walks again, other miracles will happen in the miraculous real-life montage of living. At his most searching and most pessimistic, it is the single conviction which illuminates his work.

THE CASE OF TARKOVSKY illustrates what one might otherwise be in danger of forgetting: that the Russian land has an old and sophisticated culture. Within its borders there are still many, not all of them dissidents, who think matters out for themselves and follow their chosen paths with integrity.

Nostalgia (1983) speaks of the pain of exile from these roots of artistic being. A Soviet writer undertaking important research in Italy finds himself morose, unhappy, and longing to return to his family. The guide and translator who has been delegated to help him is a beautiful young Italian woman who ought to provide a temptation to dally. The protagonist won't have it, and dourly turns instead to a relationship with a grizzled old madman of the neighbourhood (the Tuscan spa village of Bagno Vignoni). The madman's lucubrations, so close to despair—he later commits suicide—armour the Russian at this low stage in his fortunes, so that he can face his growing personal crisis with fortitude.

In the character of Evgenia, the Italian translator, we see again Tarkovsky's distance from contemporary attitudes. The protagonist seems to be critical of her beauty and, by extension, of all proud young independent women in our modern Western society. Her designer clothes belong to the aggressive, bisexual orthodoxies of modern *couture*, but her utter self-confidence disguises insecurity. Her costume is a physical embarrassment, tripping her up in the hotel, preventing her (in Piero della Francesca's chapel) from sinking to her knees. She is attempting, of course, to short-circuit the unwelcome advances of the traditional masculine predator; but the poignant consequence is to make one wonder who it is that her beauty is for. The film is about temptation, and resistance to temptation. The Russian scholar's love for his wife is made to win out over Evgenia's obvious allurements; but the very pressure of his refusal provides the film with a sombre subliminal eroticism.

The foreignness of the girl is the foreignness, too, of her country. As in *The Mirror*, Tarkovsky tests out various possible attitudes towards the West; but with a complex and ambivalent verdict. From his base inside Russia, the West could be subtly commended; but in the West itself —as newcomer, visitor, or exile—distinctions need to be made. If a larger explanation may be conjectured for the dissatisfaction of the brooding protagonist, it lies in Tarkovsky's conviction that the West in some curious way has cut itself off from experience; above all, ironically, in Italy, where History (in its works of art, palaces and monuments) is so palpably present.

The presence of History is no guarantee of understanding. Indeed the contrary: the more it *is* present, the more wilfully it may be ignored or gainsaid (think of the *Brigati Rossi*). The West, Tarkovsky concludes—he is not the only visitor to have done so—has been spoilt in its freedoms; it has forgotten, as it were, the cost of their gradual acquisition. Descendants of the Communist convulsion who have had (supposedly on their behalf) so much of their history taken away from them, know better.

The film is both meditation and warning. One admires about it, as usual, Tarkovsky's incredible seriousness; as also the perfectionism of his camerawork, infusing each frame with his conviction, personality, and strength.

WE KNOW LITTLE of Tarkovsky's early life and efforts. Son of the poet Arseni Tarkovsky, he was brought up in comparative security in a family that had been settled in Moscow for many generations. After the War he went prospecting for gold in Siberia (into the landscapes no doubt of Kurosawa's *Dursu Uzala*). In Moscow he studied history and painting, and later (1954) enrolled in the Soviet State Film School under Mikhail Romm—the apprenticeship took him six years. His first full-length feature film, *Ivan's Childhood*, won the "Golden Lion" at the 1962 Venice Festival, and started him on his career.

Naturally, it has not always been easy. *Andrei Roublev* was "held back from distribution" for some five years. Yet the setbacks, grave as they were (and are), should not perhaps be too blackly underlined. For Tarkovsky's achievement has been to keep alive the great literary traditions of the Russian 19th century. The candle still burns in its brightness, and one of the world's foremost living artists guards its flame.

La Première Sortie

—Renoir

How we would have forgotten the show,
Seen only her, still almost a child,
Unfocused all those faces, row
On row beyond her, smiled
At her animation, hoped she might
For a moment turn her enchanted eyes
To follow us into the night
At curtain-fall and the lights' surprise.

John Loveday

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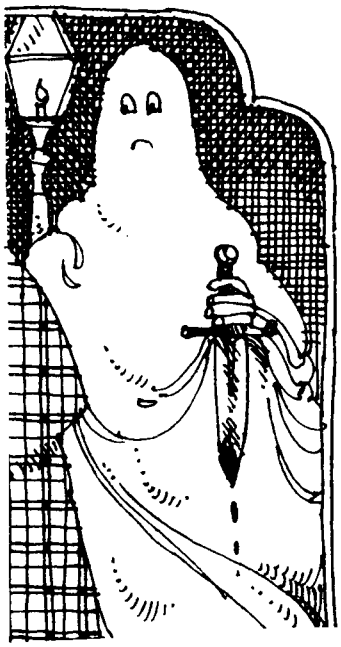
PRESS

Media Mistrust

Towards a Theory of Journalistic Malpractice

By Melvin J. Lasky



IF OUR SUBJECT is what it is programmatically set out to be, "Culture & the Media",[1] then I am not sure what it really amounts to. "*Media*" is probably unproblematical. It used to be known as the Press, until television came along; and although no channel or station or newspaper is ever referred to as "a medium"—the spiritualists at all the séances in the world would rise up and protest!—in the plural, "media", it is clear and understandable enough. We know the messages of the media: information, knowledge, interpretation, analysis, criticism, and last but not least: entertainment. But what has "culture" to do with it?

We could, I suppose, deal with the culture of the media professionals. It's a subject not very different from Margaret Mead's among the Trobriand Islanders when she was investigating the culture of the native tribes. For among the tribes of media men and women there are also customs and mores, rituals and tabus, which call out for anthropoligical classification. But if field anthropology takes us too far afield, perhaps homespun aesthetics is closer. We could just as easily discourse on the subject of how well in the media such cultural subjects as Sunday painting, music, local poetry, community architecture and the like are treated (if at all), and the extent to which man's artistic aspirations are being reported, recorded, criticised, evaluated and perhaps (ultimately) encouraged. Some corners of the media might come away with fairly good marks—the BBC-TV channels for their excellent theatre; the London *Times* for its *TLS* (*Times Literary Supplement*); the best Italian newspapers for their *terza pagina*; in Frankfurt the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* for its formidable *feuilleton*; the Swedish television for its devotion at great and admirable length to its indigenous cinematic genius Ingmar Bergman. . . . One could go on, and then break to disburse the bad marks: to the popular low-quality press in each of our countries in whose sensational columns there is rarely any place for anything but sex and crime, violence and murder, weeping mothers and/or sadistic fathers; or to the more popular, i.e. most highly "rated", television programmes which aspire to nothing higher than the lowest common denominator of thrills and gags which catch and hold the short attention-span of tens of millions of viewers, all teetering on the edge of uneasy boredom, with dangerous remote-control switches at their finger-tips. Is this our theme? Perhaps; perhaps not.

All these matters are surely part of a great problem which has been generally set for us. Who the makers of the media messages are, what their properties and characteristics are, their ideas and their *ideés fixes*, their conspicuous virtues and natural vices—all this is an aspect of valuable current anthropology, of the "sociology of knowledge" or the sociology of the knowledge-industry. And, further, the attention (or lack of attention) which is being paid in our increasingly literate, increasingly educated societies to what in more old-fashioned times used to be called "the higher things"—this, doubtless, goes to the heart of such matters as liberal values, democratic ethos, human ideals, social ethics, and what Walter Lippmann referred to as "the Public Philosophy." Is the subject really so wide as to embrace anthropology, economics, psychology, sociology, and philosophy (not to mention journalism)?

ONE PHILOSOPHER, the great Alfred North Whitehead, wrote the following (in his *Aims of Education*, 1929) about the meaning of culture which is giving us so much trouble this morning:

> "Culture is activity of thought, and receptiveness to beauty and human feeling. Scraps of information have nothing to do with it. A merely well-informed man is the most useless bore on God's earth. What we should aim at producing is men who possess both culture and expert knowledge in some special direction. Their expert knowledge will give them the ground to start from, and their culture will lead them as deep as philosophy and as high as art."

This is a noble statement, but more than a little naive in its utopian innocence of half-a-century ago. We have indeed produced several generations of men, especially in the media, who have "special knowledge in some special direction", superb technicians of film and of typography, experts in communication—but have they, or we, been led to realms "as deep as philosophy" and "as high as art"? More often to depths as low as slanderous gossip and to levels as shallow as soap opera.

[1] These are remarks made in the opening address to a conference of the International Press Institute (London), held in Venice earlier this year.

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It is this aspect of liberal and humane innocence which engages me: all our illusions about information and expertise; our self-deceptions about literacy and mass communication; our careless mistakes and grievous errors about the useful and constructive function of press and television—or "media"—in a democratic culture which is increasingly offering more treacherous traps than the golden opportunities for utopian progress which Whitehead surmised. It is to this darker aspect of the theme of "culture and the media" that I want to turn.

Hard Facts & Soft Future

IN THE development of Western culture from its modern beginnings—some put it in the English 17th century in the time of Cromwell's Revolution, accompanied as it was by brilliant pamphleteers and news-sheets (a few written and edited by no less than John Milton); others put it in the French 18th century in the time of the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment and the radical politics of Condorcet, Danton, and Robespierre—we can locate the special qualities which characterise the spirit of our modern media. Here was *urgency* and *public-spiritedness*; here was *new information* about the way we live and how society is thought to function; here was a new note of *criticism* and *candid communication*, disseminated often at great personal risks for writers and editors; here were innovative forms for the written word and the "broadcasting" of various opinions, often dissenting and dangerous. Each developing nation came to have its own "culture heroes": men who went to prison for writing as they pleased, for defending the emerging "rights of a free press." The name of the 18th-century German émigré to America, John Peter Zenger, only stands for many who over the centuries fought for the right to tell truths; his trial and acquittal of the charge of "libel" is considered the classic landmark.[2]

But if we move forward in time to our own day we note that this critical spirit has become an increasingly relentless one. In the past it helped to open up windows in a fairly closed society. Is it, in its systematic devotion to airing every issue, blowing a cold wind into every nook and corner, still opening windows—or smashing them? We must be candid enough to ask of ourselves self-critical questions like these.

The cultural context in which our media have developed has, as I have already suggested, shaped them into a necessarily critical force, subversive of conventional attitudes and, more than that, existing institutions. For if there is to be progress, *le progrès, Fortschritt*—a basic ideal in our Western pantheon of values—then we have to move forward to the *better* from *the bad*. Distressing evils are in the present; fine hopes are in the future . . . but only if we proceed to right wrongs, expose malefactors, improve faulty institutions, ameliorate our changing society. C. S. Lewis, no man to be in tune with modern fashions of thought, dismissed the contemporary class of intellectuals precisely because "we have trained them to think of the Future as a promised land which favoured heroes attain. . . ."[3]

Here, then, is the general proposition from which our media have deduced its essential maxim: good news is no news; only bad news makes headlines, interests curious and impatient readers, recaptures colourfully the kaleidoscope of fast-moving reality. The syndrome is familiar: "man bites dog", not "dog bites man", is the call which must catch the attention of us all.

AS A RESULT we have had throughout the 20th century, in the democratic communities of the world which have enjoyed a more-or-less free press, an unending cascade of devastating criticism. We know about the horror of mounting crime; the dirt in the hospitals; the child abuse in the schools; the corruption of the police; the wastage of millions in the military establishment; bribery in high and low government places; the monstrous hypocrisy of Northern affluence in a world of Southern poverty; the swindles of financiers and the greed of doctors and lawyers; the miseries of prison-life in our jails; the muggings in our parks and the gang-warfare in our streets; the insidious drug addictions in our slums. One could go on to the point of exhaustion. And my point is that it is a wonder of our lives, almost a psycho-social miracle, that we can get up each day and survive yet another round of doom and despair.

I am not trying to deride this, only to explain it. Whether it is desirable or not in the *abstract* (and we do not live in the abstract), it is inevitable in the here-and-now and it is sturdily reinforced, for better or worse, by the ethos of our Western culture—the truth will make us free. The dark side of this faith is what I want to touch upon in passing.

In the first place I am not at all certain that it is "the truth", i.e. the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, which is being told about the virtues and vices of our mixed democratic societies; I will return to this in a moment. In the second place, I am not sure that these so-called truths are invariably making us more "free", or more strong and resilient, as liberal and humane societies. I have been in bookshops in at least a dozen world capitals where there are innumerable shelves of books on all four walls—fiction as well as non-fiction—which in this spirit criticise, and expose, and indeed almost annihilate the very social-political foundations of Western societies. Are we willing to argue that all this is, invariably, an unqualified source of strength?

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[2] On the occasion of the 250th anniversary of the Zenger libel trial (4 August 1735), the US press showed itself to be pompously untroubled. *The New York Times* proposed a "toast to the Zenger jury" on behalf of the "American idea": "The freedom of the press to challenge authority and convey complaints of the citizenry is indispensable in a free society." Too true. But has nothing happened in the 250 years to raise an eyebrow of self-critical questioning?

[3] What he loosely called "the general movement of our time" had the effect of fixing "men's affections on the Future, on the very core of temporality. Hence nearly all vices are rooted in the future. Gratitude looks to the past and love to the present; fear, avarice, lust, and ambition look ahead. . . . We want a whole race perpetually in pursuit of the rainbow's end, never honest nor kind, nor happy *now*, but always using as mere fuel wherewith to heap on the altar of the future every real gift which is offered them in the present. . . ." C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (1942, Fount ed., 1984), pp. 130, 77-79.

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We are, at least most of us here, all writers, critical journalists, sceptical editors, independent intellectuals—and each of us has often dwelt on the "negative side" of our own cultures and governments. We are justifiably proud of efforts to tell us *what has gone wrong*—I myself am groping towards that kind of critical position before you this morning. But I have also come to the unhappy feeling that we in the West all too easily say, "Of course we are relentlessly critical—therefore ours is a healthy society!" I too once believed that, and am now beginning to disbelieve it. More and more it is, I feel, like saying that because there are a good dozen brilliant surgeons on hand to analyse a case of cancer, therefore the case of cancer isn't really as bad as it originally was! I know that this is the faith that we in the democracies live by; I am just wondering whether the faith isn't misplaced. Writers have made a fetish of "swimming against the tide"; but there is also a danger of drowning. André Gide used to preach that "the truth wounds only to cure"; but is the patient always so lucky? I doubt it. As in certain doctor-patient relations, the result of careless and blunt truth-telling does not reinforce the will-to-live but induces despair. In the case of the United States, the 20th-century decades from the "Muckrakers" to the Ideologists of a "sinful, evil America" brought a chronically cheerful population to a state of such melancholy that public-opinion polls revealed that for the first time—it deeply depressed President Jimmy Carter in 1978—the old Yankee optimism was giving way to despairing feelings that the future would bring nothing good at all for their children. . . .

THIS, THEN, IS my first question about the relations between our cultural tradition and the spirit of the media. Is the balance right between the ethical and philosophical commitment to maintaining (and, if you will, "improving") a free, changing, democratic society—and I take it that this is what our media-makers as citizens are publicly committed to—and the actual practice of cameramen, thrusting mike-in-hand interviewers, and stop-press headline-writers? Put another way, is the balance right between the primary responsibile civic engagement and the traditional century-old role of the intelligentsia as a radical avant-garde, the journalist as the gadfly of the state, and our media corps *en masse* as a permanent, relentless opposition to established institutions, to everything that is and has been?

I ask the question; I am not alone in the Western world in asking for an historic reconsideration. Dogs do bite men; and if thereafter no cases of rabies are ever registered, as in the British Isles, then it is good reportable news. Neo-Nazis are not always "on the march again" in Germany; and when a peaceful constitutional order stabilises itself over three decades, as in the Bonn Republic, then it should be registered, even at the expense of ferreting out a group of young Bavarians wearing swastikas on their sleeves in a Munich suburb or digging up the graves of *SS*-men in a Bitburg cemetery. Not every bark and bite, grunt and groan of an IRA terrorist or Shi'ite kidnapper contributes something new to the public understanding. Isn't there some virtue in a balanced overview which corrects the distortions of thousands of scraps of bad news? Not if the media is consecrated to some specious formula of (to use the popular American phrase of the day, a formula as mindless as it is ungrammatical) "*telling it like it is*." A few facts, sometimes even a great many, are being confounded with the whole truth.

Adversarial Culture

MY SECOND CONSIDERATION follows on from what has just been said: for the basic aspect of our modern culture, bearing upon it a relationship to the media, is that—to use the idea made famous by the late Columbia University critic, Lionel Trilling—it is *adversarial*.

The notion of an "*adversary culture*" has become part of our common vocabulary; and it is an additional factor to those which have been mentioned—the idea of Progress; the loyalty to the ideals of "1789 and all that"; the pride in the early martyrs of heroic liberation struggles—to explain the mood of discontent and disaffection which colours our contemporary temperament. Endemic to our modern culture is "*nay*-saying", never "*yea*-saying." If the balance of truth, dictated by moderation, dispassion, and reason, lies somewhere in the middle, then so much the worse for the middle: it was always a "centre that cannot hold." The New York publicist Irving Kristol has summed up the American experience, and in citing it I feel confident that its validity extends, *mutatis mutandis*, to most places in Western society (and in other continents which have emulated certain Western patterns and habits, such as India, Japan, etc.).

> ". . . It is hardly to be denied that the culture that educates us—the patterns of perception and thought our children absorb in their schools, at every level—is unfriendly (at the least) to the commercial civilisation, the bourgeois civilisation, within which most of us live and work. When we send our sons and daughters to college, we may expect that by the time they are graduated they are likely to have a lower opinion of our social and economic order than when they entered. We know this from opinion poll data; we know it from our own experience.
>
> We are so used to this fact of our lives, we take it so for granted, that we fail to realise how extraordinary it is. Has there ever been, in all recorded history, a civilisation whose culture was at odds with the values and ideals of that civilisation itself? . . ."[4]

It would take us too far afield to follow this argument all the way to the explanation of the "anti-bourgeois" or anti-Establishment ideology which is the cultural colouration of many (certainly not *all*) sectors of our media. But one caution is worth making, in order to forfend any heated discussion based on misunderstandings. It is not uncommon that a culture will be critical of the civilisation that sustains it; and always critical of the failure of this civilisation to realise

[4] Irving Kristol, "The Adversary Culture of Intellectuals", ENCOUNTER (October 1979), pp. 5-14.

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perfectly the ideals that it claims as an inspiration. "Such criticism", as Kristol points out, "is implicit or explicit in Aristophanes and Euripides, in Dante and Shakespeare. But to take an adversary posture towards the ideals themselves? That is unprecedented."

One need not go so far. There is an impulse in the adversary culture—and it is this which is my concern, and not the secret advocacy of hidden new ideals of some "alternative culture" or society—which can have its stop at the half-way station of nihilism. All social forms and human arrangements must be unmasked; all myths demythologised; all politicians exposed (except a few, very favourite sons, noble warriors in the common cause), and all present policies rejected for their confusions, inconsistencies, and incoherencies. One must conclude, after reading the great investigative reporting of the last few decades, that if only society were to be conducted by our intellectual critics, our journalists, our crusading editors, our columnist-pundits, all would suddenly be well—foreign policies would be thoughtful and effective, economic programmes would be scientific and realistic, arts policies would lead to a veritable cultural renaissance. Nothing is ever seen as problematic, difficult, recalcitrant.

Implicit in radical negation is the prospect of some easy utopian solution. "Reagan's racism" is responsible for lingering black poverty in the USA; how easy it would be to make the old Negro ghettos flower in humanism *if only* our ethnic theories would prevail. . . . "Kohl's philistinism" is responsible for the dull and uninspired role of Germany in the world today; *if only* our *Kulturkritik* would take power . . . . "Thatcher's hard-heartedness" is responsible for the British industrial decline into unemployment and class strife; *if only* our neo-Keynesian social formula would be adopted. . . .

I have now, I believe, roughly summarised a hundred articles in the British press, a thousand editorials in the German and American newspapers, and innumerable hours of television documentaries on all the little milky screens of the electronic world. Mind you, I am not here concerned with the politics, Left or Right, of these matters, only with the mind-set of an adversarial culture which dictates certain attitudes and patterns of judgment. "*Against*" is what we must be. It's the duty of the opposition to oppose.

The New Shamanism

THIS LEADS ME to underscore a tendency of our media in the contemporary political culture which combines the unfortunate predispositions which I have already put to you—(*1*) the exaggerated self-importance of some of our self-styled truth-tellers in the struggle for progress; and (*2*) the indefatigable oppositionism of an élite class educated either to forward-looking utopianism or to the habits of "debunking", exposing, unmasking the civilisation which produced them and sustains them.

It may be hard for them to accept the bitter fact that that very civilisation—faulty as it is—also contributes to their own disorientation and personal distortion. In order to communicate even the most dissident views, media-makers must necessarily operate within the culture, the so-called "mass" or "popular culture"; and they take on the accents and stratagems of a communications world they would *ordinarily*—that is, if they were not part of it and profiting from it—criticise most mercilessly. Whom should it surprise that so corrupt a culture will produce hucksters of cultural dissent? Why should such an all-pervasive shabbiness not create shabby critics with threadbare characters?

IN NEW YORK RECENTLY, there were three great cases which were dominating the media; and they illustrate in their somewhat different ways what I have been trying to suggest about the communications culture. I refer to the two cases heard before the US courts which involved the libel suits of General William Westmoreland against *CBS*-Television and General Ariel Sharon against *Time* Magazine. The third matter was the formidable series of articles which *The New York Times* published about New York City's chief Medical Examiner, whose apparent misdemeanours, corrupt or careless or otherwise, in a dozen incidents of murder made, when I read about them each day, my hair stand on end.

The Sharon case has been decided, with the Israeli general winning no libel damages, but enjoying a victory: *Time* Magazine in its extremist reporting about his controversial role in Lebanon had been judged both inaccurate and negligent, as well as defamatory. The Westmoreland trial was abrogated, with the defending lawyers of the TV media-stars still trying hard to prove that the General was actually involved in a "*conspiracy*" to deceive the President of the United States, his commander-in-chief; and the General soon wearying of a court-room battle in which the professional soldier was a rank hopeless amateur. The matter of the unfortunate Dr Gross, who allegedly made a disgraceful mess of a dozen autopsies (and thereby impeded the course of justice), is leading to inquiries, suspensions, million-dollar lawsuits, and profound doubts about the whole urban system of so-called law and order.

What all three cases have in common bears upon what I have been saying in trying to characterise the contemporary communications culture: i.e. the psychology of our leading Western publicists, the spirit of the public-spirited media, the ethos of our adversarial protagonists. In each case the media—a great daily newspaper, an acclaimed news-weekly, a much-honoured TV-and-Radio Broadcasting System—claimed to be acting in the interests of truth, but with the arrogance of dogmatists who always claim to have a monopoly of it. The evidence against Sharon was very hazy at best, and non-existent (so far as the charge of being a revanchist-murderer was concerned) at worst. The evidence against General Westmoreland as a "conspirator" is controversial, disputed, and easily susceptible to the interpretation that in the desperate conduct of a war like that in Viet Nam, or indeed *any* war, there are serious and honest differences of opinion about strategy, tactics, intelligence estimates, about what to do and how to do it. None of this needs to be ascribed to sinister intent, needs to be "criminalised" into motivations of treasonable conspiracy. The evidence against Dr Gross is lurid and chilling, but when

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The New York Times reportage was, in turn, looked into by reporters of a rival newspaper, the *New York Post*—and this is the latest style in our fashion of Investigative Reporting: investigating the investigators!—it emerged that a good many (who can say how many) of the charges were under a cloud, were loose hearsay, exaggerated misquotations, suspect recriminations by rival medical doctors, and the like.

THERE ARE two deviant cultural elements here.

(*1*) The first is that at the edges of our Western cultural temperament there has always lurked a tendency towards conspiracy theories, and the demonisation of culprits. The Jacobins were certain that the King and his Queen were monsters who really deserved to lose their heads; historians take a more differentiated and sceptical view of this. Scholars have also rigorously qualified the extreme *pro-et-contra* views of Napoleon (as in Pieter Geyl's masterful history); and relativised the total guilt of the Kaiser in World War I or of the "Merchants of Death", the armament dealers, in bringing American troops to the French front in 1917.

This simple, primitive, and essentially mythological attitude towards historical causation has been moving again into the centre of the Western mind. Immoderate passions rage, unreasonable convictions gain an upper hand. This process intensifies under the influence of the pressures for immediate and sensational effect which, to a lesser or greater extent, grips almost all of our media.

The New York Times just would not devote fifty columns of space to an investigation which reported *on-the-one-hand* and *on-the-other* and went on about how complex and morally ambivalent criminal police work can often be in the largest and most violent city in the world. They had to find a villain, a dyed-in-the-wool malefactor, a monster of iniquity. The TV reporters just couldn't produce a backward glance at the battle of Saigon, an unsensational documentary which didn't cry havoc; it might be too quiet, too boring, too lacking in punch. Prime time cries out for a sensation or a scoop, in this case a sinister criminal conspirator. What Tom Wolfe has called (and he knows, for he's practised it) the *biff!-boom!-bang!* style in journalism prevailed against all other considerations: especially those that might lead to a sense of the complexity of tragedies and the complications of human motivation.

More than that, the Editors of *Time* Magazine exposed themselves as theologians of the printed word, as dogmatists of the dispatch, persuaded of a truth *a priori*—and if the evidence for conspiracy, murder, or being an accessory to the crime isn't in "*Appendix A*" or in "*Appendix B*" then it must be *somewhere*, probably in other secret places or among hidden-away witnesses which involved or guilt-ridden officials are refusing to reveal. They *know* this, the truth, in advance, even if they don't (as yet) have the facts of the matter. This is pride, *hubris*, of Mephistophelian proportions.

(*2*) What I have called deviant cultural twists—the distorted semi-intellectual conviction that the full truth is theirs for the asking, and that the ensuing revelation is of such evil that men and women will be stopped in their tracks—may well be what Lévy-Bruhl would consider examples of primitive, pre-logical thinking: deep human tendencies which thousands of years of progressive civilisation have not been able to eliminate. But it is, ironically enough, a product of our very sophisticated and literate culture. The irony is that the men who have fallen under its spell are not the shamans, or the witch-doctors, or the demagogues, or the corrupt cynics from whom in the past we have had such effusions. They are all educated and cultivated men, children of the Enlightenment and of public-spirited ideals. In their Western education they were exposed to the intellectual heroes of a sceptical frame of mind: from Socrates to Galileo and Pierre Bayle, from Voltaire to Bertrand Russell. They were nurtured on the legal ideals of meticulous fairness, as developed in the Anglo-Saxon juridical tradition from Blackstone to Maitland, from Holmes to Brandeis to Cardozo. They have been immersed in the complexities and subtleties of modern literature from Flaubert and Stendhal to Proust and Camus, from Kafka to Bellow, from Manzoni to Silone, from Dostoevsky to Thomas Mann. But *here* there are no simple and easy human motivations; *here* there are no black-and-white villains or heroes; *here* there are investigations into the news of life of the highest order.

We need not be so immodest as to think that we, in the world of the media and of periodical literature, writing and editing quickly for daily, weekly, and monthly deadlines, must aim so high. But there is surely a profound paradox lurking here, the very modern contradiction of the contemporary communications culture, produced as it is by publicists of the richest potential and regressing under the pressure of progress to poor and primitive forms of ritualistic noise, to incantations worthy of the darkest witchcraft, to electronic mumbo-jumbo.

I leave you with this paradox, and my own puzzlement. The only true flash of hot- and spot-news I have for you this morning is that we are having real troubles in our tribe. Perhaps I should have talked about anthropology after all. The shamans are amongst us.

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LETTERS

Michael Howard & Irving Kristol

I AM SORRY, but Irving Kristol's riposte to my letter (ENCOUNTER, June) will not do. Britain expected no help from the United States over the Falklands affair under the terms of the North Atlantic Treaty. We hoped that they would fulfil their obligations to assist in repelling armed aggression as a signatory to the United Nations Charter, as indeed they did. If they had not, but had supported the Argentinians, there would indeed have been some explaining to do; not only to the British, but to their own people, and to the international community as a whole.

The trouble is that "the spirit" of a treaty, to which Mr Kristol so confidently appeals, means what any signatory at any moment wants it to mean. That is why in drafting a text diplomats go to such trouble to avoid ambiguities; and if their work is to be ignored in so cavalier a fashion, it is hard to see why anyone bothers to sign a treaty at all. I could claim with as much justification as does Mr Kristol that it is contrary to the "spirit" of the North Atlantic Treaty for the United States, having pledged its support to its allies in Western Europe, to assume obligations elsewhere in the world that might diminish the effectiveness of that support.

It is unilateral interpretations of this kind rather than "legalistic quibbling" that erode international agreements. The only way in which they can be tested and misunderstandings eliminated is to look at the treaty and see what it actually said. This is not "legalistic": it is simply common sense.

MICHAEL HOWARD

Oxford

WHEN a distinguished scholar of military and diplomatic history starts talking solemnly about "the United Nations Charter" and "the international community", my attention flags and my interest dwindles. Should Professor Howard wish, once again, to talk about the real world, I would then be happy to pick up this conversation.

IRVING KRISTOL

New York City

Kristol's Warning

THE THRUST of Irving Kristol's essay (ENCOUNTER, March) is that the European community is not in step with the Reagan administration's Central American policy because: (*1*) for domestic political reasons, European élites feel compelled to quarrel with Americans; and (*2*) Europeans lack Americans' self-confidence to oppose Soviet ideology and opportunism. Mr Kristol is right in asserting that Europe does not have the stake in Central America that America does, and thus can afford to be whimsical. However, he fails to acknowledge that Europeans can have legitimate differences of opinion on the basis of both conviction and experience.

Europeans worried about Soviet expansionism before Americans did. Woodrow Wilson listened, and learned, from Lloyd George. More important, European powers have long wrestled with revolutions and post-revolutionary régimes in their former colonies in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and, lest it be forgotten, the Caribbean. Europe has no definitive answers to the grave problems that plague Central America; but there are no such answers—only the best of a lot of bad solutions.

Mr Kristol bluntly threatens the European community about not heeding the Reagan administration's counsel: "A major clash between the United States and Europe over Central America could soon lead to overwhelming pressures in the United States for a redefinition of its role in NATO—even to the point of the withdrawal of US forces from the European continent. . . ." The threat is not credible. Rather than shake his finger at Europeans, Mr Kristol should ask his countrymen to study the experience of the British in Zimbabwe, of the French in Algeria, of the Dutch in Indonesia. . . . Europe will never have the interest in Central America that the United States does; but a conversation among parties is still likely to be more fruitful than a fatherly lecture.

FORREST D. COLBURN

Managua
Nicaragua

David Rokeah . . . life & death

I AM NOT *sure [Abba Hillel writes to us from Jerusalem] whether one needs to call it to the attention of your readers: the sad news of the death, at the age of 69, of the Hebrew poet David Rokeah, so many of whose fine poems appeared in the pages of* ENCOUNTER. *He was an Israeli (since he left Poland in 1934), and his death occurred suddenly in Duisburg, West Germany, on 29 May, and who knows whether such transnational news items about the passing of a man who wrote verses really get recorded?* ENCOUNTER *readers will certainly want to have the sadness registered. And perhaps, if you have the space, to remind them of how memorable those verses were. In England two volumes were published: "Eyes in the Rock" (1968) and "Red Earth" (1974).*

As literary irony would have it, two of his ENCOUNTER *poems (in the November 1978 and the September 1974 numbers) appear in retrospect to span the course of life and death.*

When did I lose my faith
when did I find my faith again
there is no trace in my diary
nor in the public records.

Alone with my heretical speculations
alone with the unresolved arithmetic of my loves
alone with the intricate heritage of my dead fathers
alone with Jerusalem in exile
alone with the Mediterranean Sea which is God
alone with the desert which is God

I was born on the day of the Temple's destruction
I was born on the day of Agnon's birth

(tr. Matthew Mead)

And, as another poet put it, in his beginning was his end.

Night that turns into dialogue. Sea, rain
and lightning wait for signs from the weather
station at Beit Dagan. Our obscure errands
disturb no radar screens.
Night without images. The unknown in us
like unlocated springs that feed the river current.
Night of distant bells. Let this night
go on. Let it go on. No midnight for time
that starts to be measured at midnight

(tr. Robert Mezey)

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On Popper's Revaluation

D. C. STOVE's contribution ("Karl Popper & The Jazz Age") is just too rich to let pass unremarked. One occasionally finds such morsels in our professional journals (rarely, happily). One then trusts the reader will be harmlessly amused, and lets it pass at that. It is a different show when an essentially technical paper finds its way to a more general journal.

I have no real quarrel with the tenets bandied about in the article. It is the temperament it displays, through use of language and juxtaposition of topics that prompts the following. In its way the piece sets a new record; I had thought the Zinoviev interviews of last spring in ENCOUNTER would hold the title for a longer time. Adopting a somewhat artificial point of view, one could argue it manages this by the same device of shock tactics.

The tenor of the article being set by a cute title and a quotation from Cole Porter, we have a rollicking account of internecine feuds and asps in worthy bosoms, capped by a hilarious illustration of what might happen when you insist that your desk dictionary should answer to all the uses of a word in a technical context. (Or was that burlesque supposed to be read as a grotesque?) One does wonder, German being "off limits", how this was set up in the original.

The very notion of a philosophy of science—as an entity in its own right, distinct from the history of scientific endeavours on the one side, and philosophy proper (read: epistemology) on the other—is enough to raise one's eyebrows. Or hackles. Indeed, in most universities that yielded to that particular turf-war, I believe the first two are combined.[1] I cannot help quoting the surprised Frenchman, who finding himself in the street with a pain in the left arm knocks on the first door identifying a doctor, only to learn that he got the wrong man, an LLD (*un docteur en droit*): "I did not imagine you were already so specialised. . . ."

And then to drag in that lovely *non sequitur*, Wolfe's *From Bauhaus to Our House*, with what in the present context is probably *de rigueur*—a snipe at Frank Lloyd Wright (because he dabbled in the philosophy of architecture?). It is all indeed too much.

Professor Thomas Kuhn's "Revolutions" appealed to scientific researchers and will continue to do so to those who see around them, in their own speciality, the shifts in fashions, methodologies, and sometimes, *mirabile dictu*, what they would call a "paradigm" shift. All this makes for exciting reading even without much use for the history in it, and even less for the *soi-disant* philosophy.

What a shame. All this kind of thing is such a pleasure to read, too.

MICHA HOFRI

Dept of Computer Science
Technion-IIT, Haifa.

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[1] Computer Science departments are probably even more numerous. I happen to be in one. There is small difference between the number of my colleagues and the number of different opinions on what makes *CS* special and distinct from all disciplines under the sun. We happen to cater to a very real need of industry and society.

MR MICHA HOFRI evidently disliked my article, but he does not say where, or even whether, he disagrees with it, So I will not be ignoring any criticism if I ignore his letter.

D. C. STOVE

University of Sydney

Fishy Story

ADDITIONAL COMMENT on the expression "*kettle of fish*" may appear supererogatory, but it is of interest that "*keddle*"—Mr T. Wheeldon's choice as the correct word for the cooking pot in question (Letters, July-August)—as likely as not alters "kiddle", a "weir or fish-trap formed of wicker or basketwork." The progression of kiddle into keddle would be neither more nor less estimable than that of keddle into kettle. Indeed, in my part of the world we frequently refer to that regrettable mess of fish as neither a kiddle, a keddle, nor a kettle, but a "*kittle*." And we feel no shame.

WILLARD R. ESPY

The Red Cottage
Oysterville, Washington

Pearce's War

AS USUAL, Edward Pearce has rather splendidly missed the point in his discussion of "The Far-Away Falklands" (ENCOUNTER, April). The Falklands war was not, except incidentally, fought over national honour; nor was it, Mr Julian Amery's fantasies notwithstanding, fought over any Antarctic Eldorado. The stakes in the Falklands war were Hong Kong, and Gibraltar, not to mention Guyana and Belize and, in a sense, even Ulster. I do not for a moment mean to suggest that the Royal Navy could or should be sent in to "save" Hong Kong. But consider how much worse a deal Britain might have struck with China for the five million people of Hong Kong had she merrily signalled her willingness to abdicate her responsibilities toward those two thousand Falkland Islanders.

Whether, as Mr Pearce points out, the Foreign Office did not bungle its way into the war is another question. Whether the war was not then prosecuted in a ludicrous and criminal fashion is another again; and whether the "Fortress Falklands" policy is not turning an already bizarre situation into a truly absurd one is perhaps the most pressing question of all. But however one answers these questions bears not a whit on the justice and necessity of the war itself, once it was begun. Like it or not, Britain still has duties beyond Penzance as well as beyond Dover, and not just to herself.

D. S. PROUDFOOT

Montréal

Wolfgang?

I NOTE in ENCOUNTER (June, p. 79) the following interesting remark (about "the Brecht-Luxemburg syndrome"):

> ". . . The first one that jumps off the bandwagon and sings a verse of Wolfgang von der Vogelweide and offers a passing thought on behalf of, say, Erasmus, or Don Carlos, or Mme de Staël, may look odd and sound funny—but it could be the beginning of the biggest thing in German culture since sliced pumpernickel."

This might well be. You don't even have to be German, as they say, to like pumpernickel. But—*Wolfgang* von der Vogelweide? Maybe your Berlin correspondent meant Johann Walther von Goethe!

JAMES P. O'DONNELL

School of Communications
Boston University

"Peace" Periods

JULIAN LEWIS (ENCOUNTER, July-August) ascribes the aims of the two major periods of CND activity to a direct effort to influence major nuclear armament decisions by the British Government.

Probably so, but perhaps it should also be noted that the quiet period between coincided exactly with the Viet Nam war. The Aldermaston marchers all became members of the "Peace Movement" and campaigned for the Americans to stop using all their weapons.

Only with the defeat of the Americans did the anti (Western) nuclear weapons campaign resume.

W. M. G. BROWN

London

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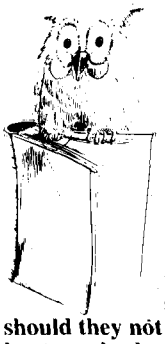
Life & Letters Today

London



BOAT PERSON: **I did not know [Ferdinand Mount writes] before reading his obituary that Enver Hoxha was a keen admirer of the works of Jerome K. Jerome. It is curious to think of this horrible man pausing to liquidate, perhaps with his own revolver, a few dozen fellow Albanian bandits before returning to the adventures of '*Three Men in a Boat*.'**

Perhaps one should beware of thinking that tyrants have no sense of humour. For if they can be obsessive Wagner fans, fond of sweet cakes and kind to animals, why should they not also be able to laugh at the time Harris was kept awake by the swans at Henley? Having sympathetic tastes does not redeem their cruelty. On the contrary, it deprives them of the excuse of madness.

All the same, I am not sure I shall feel quite the same about Jerome K. Jerome.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

Paris

FRENCH TUNES: *Although it is now possible in France to sue someone for using non-French words such as* **weekend** *or* **drugstore**, *a group of Socialist deputies wants to make such usage a crime. The proposed law prompted the newspaper* **Le Monde** *to suggest that the widely used Anglicism "sandwich" could be rendered* **"deux morceaux de pain avec quelque chose au milieu"***—two pieces of bread with something in the middle. Less concise but more French,* **Le Monde** *observed.*

Yet France seems to be fighting a rear-guard action. Even the prestigious French Academy has admitted the words **holdup** *and* **gadget** *to its dictionary while rejecting terms such as* **flashback** *and* **brainstorming.** *A few years ago, when Culture Minister Jack Lang tried to clamp a limit on the number of songs in English on radio and television, the industry balked. In one recent week, 11 of the top 20 tunes on government radio were in English.*

U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT

London

OMISSIONS: *Germans relying on Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag's new dictionary will be puzzled over their country's recent history. It omits the words "Nazi . . . Gauleiter . . . Führer . . . Fascist . . . Gestapo."*

THE TIMES

London

IN-WORD FOR OUT: **"They outplace, you outplace, I am fired."** *Outplacement* **is the nasty new vogue word insinuating itself into British boardrooms.**

It's a snob word—applied only to senior managers and never to *hoi polloi***—meaning to sack a man with kid gloves by getting outside experts to do the job for you.**

It's a sneaky job with a mealy-mouthed terminology. Outplacement specialists talk of "working smoothly to implement the termination and minimise embarrassment, cost and disruption."

What they mean is to persuade top people to go quietly—especially those who know where the corporate bodies are buried.

Outplacement specialists have no trouble convincing themselves of their altruism. They talk of moving round pegs from square holes and putting them into round holes; of the constructive and positive approach to changing management needs; of helping the "termination" take place amicably.

Me, I'd rather be sacked than outplaced.

DAILY MAIL

Moscow

BOOTLESS CRIES: *Incompetence at a Soviet shoe factory reached such a level that an entire shipment of boots was sent to the shops with high heels attached at the toe, the weekly "Literaturnaya Gazeta" said yesterday.*

The boots were put on special display at an exhibition of defective work in the Ukraine designed to shame manufacturers into improving efficiency at their factories.

REUTER

London

USED CARS: **Bernard Levin writes in his article that many recent Tory MPs "look, sound and behave like so many used car salesmen."**

However well-balanced and factual the rest of the article may be, this statement shows a lack of insight [writes Colin Grassick, of Grassick's Garage Ltd.]. As a used car salesman, I know that it would be impossible to earn a living selling cars if I were to "sound and behave as MPs do." Would any buyer purchase a car if he were subjected to the appalling manners, shouting and jeering that are all too often heard as the Commons conducts its business?

As for "looking like a used car salesman", I am sure that Mr Levin will recall that it was a politician's picture that bore the caption, "Would You Buy a Used Car from This Man?"

THE TIMES

Moscow

MARKING MICHAEL: *They read the works of Nostradamus in Moscow, too. One of the old seer's predictions which is currently causing a bit of a buzz amongst the paranormal- and occult-conscious Muscovites is the one that goes:*

"There will be three old and sick Czars
And then there will come a new Czar
Whose name will be Michael the Marked
And he will be the last Czar,
And after him will be War with the yellow people."

Michael the Marked is, of course, taken to refer to the strawberry birthmark on Gorbachev's brow.

THE GUARDIAN

New York

BALL PARKS: **We live in a levelling, stolidly non-élitist age [Clive Barnes writes], where even Leonard Bernstein, champion of the Common Man, can say in an acceptance speech for a "Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award", that the only types of music are the good and the bad, and go on to equate Mozart, Ellington, Maria Callas, and Ray Charles. Sure, and Truman Capote is up there pitching with Bill Shakespeare, and Norman Rockwell is teaching Leonardo a trick or two.**

Personally I don't think that Ellington or Gershwin are even playing in the same ball park as Mozart—they are not even playing the same game.

NEW YORK POST

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"This is a definitive study—a work which is going to be accorded classical status. Its field, the history of the earth sciences, will never again be quite the same.

. . . Its theme is the argument that occurred in the 1830s and 1840s over the character of the stratigraphy and structure of Devon, but, as Rudwick amply demonstrates, this was no local squabble; the debate had international ramifications extending from Russia into the New World. The protagonists were the geological giants of the day. . . . . [Rudwick] has found that for which every author prays: an indulgent* publisher. [He] has been allowed to present his study upon a most lavish scale. There is no hint of quibbling over wordage or penny-pinching over illustration."
–Gordon L. Herries Davies, *Nature*

"Anyone interested in the way science actually works (as opposed to the myths created by philosophers of science and the scientists themselves) will be fascinated by this book."
–Peter J. Bowler, *New York Times Book Review*

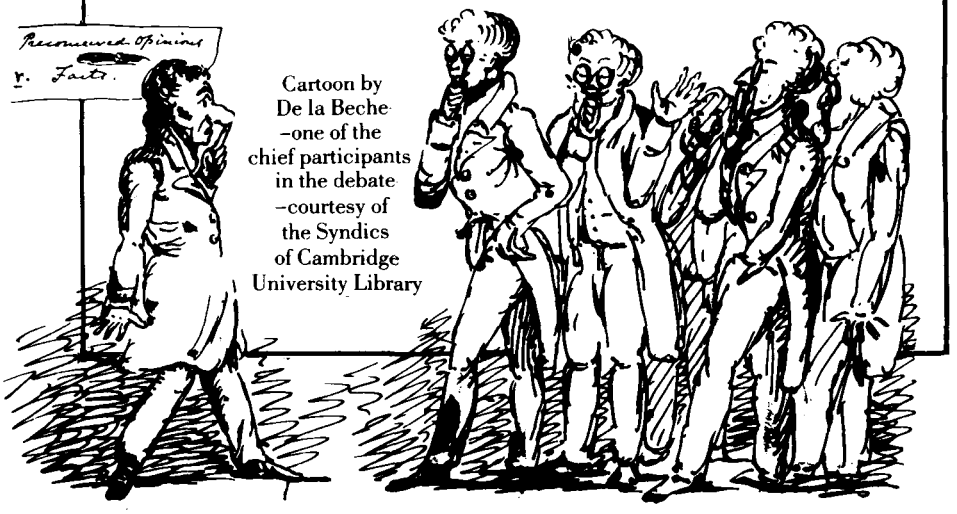
"He organizes the story and traces its themes with a philosopher's clarity of mind, a scientist's technical panache, a sociologist's sense of the complexity of human interaction, and a novelist's command of narrative. . . . Rudwick invests *The Great Devonian Controversy* with every possible intellectual resonance, and his salty, crotchety characters emerge with Dickensian clarity."
–Mark Caldwell, *Village Voice*

*Not indulgent–just willing, as is our wont, to give a splendid book its due.

THE GREAT DEVONIAN CONTROVERSY

The Shaping of Scientific Knowledge Among Gentlemanly Specialists

Martin J. S. Rudwick



Cartoon by De la Beche –one of the chief participants in the debate –courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library

The University of Chicago Press

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